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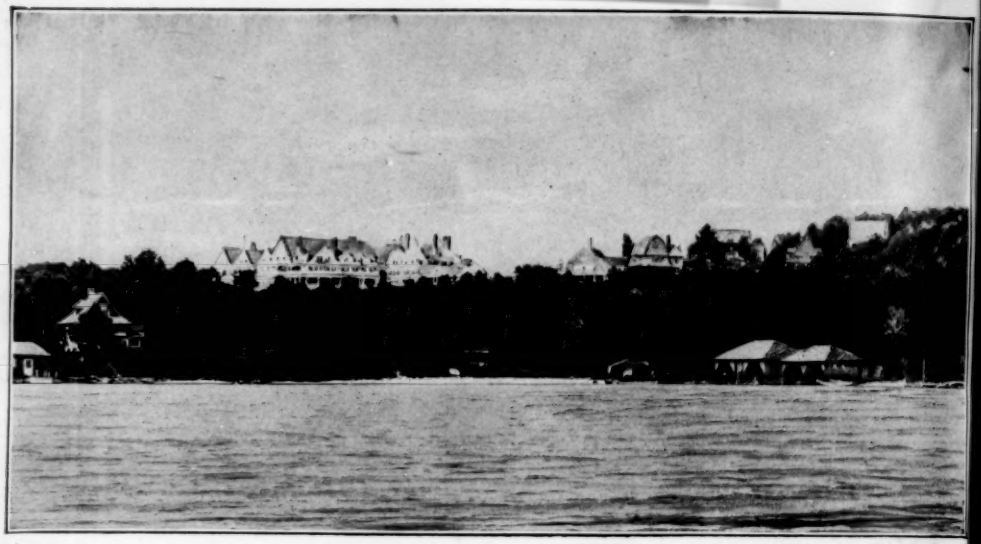

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The Black Cat

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Contents

The Sole Survivor	*Gerald Morgan*	1
The Man From Indiana	*Merden Law*	8
Cupid, Mind-Reader	*Guy D. Wilson*	15
The Revolution	*Leslie W. Quirk*	22
Half-Past Ten	*A. L. Tildesley*	30
Wheeny Shifts the Climax	*Louis Schneider*	35
In Ashes Burn Their Wonted Fires	*Edith Miniter*	41
Dora of Three Dot	*Fred Turner Ranney*	46
The Funeral at Paradise Bar	*Paul Shoup*	49

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The Sole Survivor

BY GERALD MORGAN

CAPTAIN ULRICH VON BREDOW of the Thirty-second Imperial German cavalry (dismounted) approached his chief, Major Stein. Major Stein was red-faced and stout, Captain von Bredow, tall and soldierly. Major Stein was at the moment about to take a bath, and was cursing his orderly.

The battalion had just been replaced by another battalion in the trenches (for that was what the cavalry was doing, in front of Altkirch, in Alsace), and was going into reserve quarters two miles behind that town. Provided there was no action, Captain von Bredow could count on a fortnight's holiday, and he meant to pay a visit to a lady that very night. It was indeed fortunate that his friend's chateau was so near.

"It's almost as stupid here as in the trenches," said Captain von Bredow, tentatively.

The major, in the midst of his washing, merely grunted. He did not like Von Bredow.

"We scarcely fired a shot all last month," continued Von Bredow. "Do you suppose there's any chance of an engagement?"

If the major had been in a good humor, he would have said, "Go on, but don't ride into Switzerland," for the Swiss border was close, and internment certain. The major knew perfectly well what Captain von Bredow wanted to do, but the major was not in a good humor. So he merely said, "The General Staff isn't in the habit of giving me advance information."

Captain von Bredow moved off. He meant to go at any rate, but he would like to square himself a little with his chief, whom he cordially despised as a rough Dantzig boor, but who was, nevertheless, his chief. So instead of saying, "I thought General Joffré might have apprized you"—a remark which occurred to him—he walked off and found his horse. As he mounted, it flashed across his mind that there might be an attack,—but there had been none for over four months, nor the slightest change in the battle lines in the Altkirch section, so he rode off.

Down a wooded lane for three miles rode Captain von Bredow, until he came to the avenue that led to the old chateau of the D'Arenbergs. His thoughts were pleasant; it was fine to take chances; to stalk pickets between the lines at night; to pursue women in the intervals of war. It was fine to be a man.

All was quiet at Chateau d'Arenberg; stillness seemed to have settled on those old walls forever. The Count d'Arenberg had disappeared after the rout of the French from Muhlhausen; the German authorities had every reason to believe that he was a spy, and he would probably be shot if he were caught. No doubt he was in France.

But the young Countess d'Arenberg

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was still there, with her children and the old aunt she called *maman*. It was the countess whom Captain von Bredow wished to see, for she was a pretty woman. He had known her before the war. He wondered, as he rode down the avenue, whether she too, were a spy; one never could tell with these Alsatians. But that only lent spice to the adventure, and the captain particularly fancied himself in a Montague-Capulet love affair. After all, spy or not, the countess was a pretty woman.

The captain dismounted and noisily clanged the antique knocker. The sound reverberated startlingly through the twilight stillness.

It was some minutes before the light footsteps of a woman approached the door. It slowly opened, and there stood the Countess d'Arenberg herself. She was dressed in a summer gown; her slight figure was almost lost under a rough straw gardener's hat, beneath which strayed wisps of fair hair. Her quiet blue eyes surveyed the captain gravely.

"Don't you remember me?" he asked.

"Captain von Bredow," she replied, slowly. She paused. "I didn't expect to see you here, of course. I thought all the East Prussian regiments were in the East. Won't you come in? I'm sorry I can't offer you anything. We have no servants in the house, as you see. Perhaps you don't know my husband is under suspicion?"

"Your presence is sufficient reward," said the captain gallantly. He believed in being direct with women.

She ignored the compliment. "Perhaps you don't know my husband is under suspicion," she repeated.

"With no good reason, I'm sure," said Von Bredow politely.

"May I ask whether your visit is personal or official? My house has been twice searched already. Would you care to begin?"

Von Bredow clicked his heels together like a good German soldier. "You do me a great injustice," he answered, surveying her slight figure and plucky blue eyes with admiration; "I know nothing of your husband. I have never forgotten you since those days when we were friends together at Aix-les-Bains—the year you took the waters. You invited me here then."

Her eyes softened. "Perhaps I am unjust," she said. "Please be seated. There is no one here but *maman* and the children, you know."

The captain remained standing. "Have you forgotten," he said, directly, "that I told you that I loved you at Aix-les-Bains?"

She jumped to her feet. "And have *you* forgotten," she flashed back, "that I told you that I loved my husband? Now you must go at once." She walked to the heavy door and threw it open. "Go," she said.

He started abruptly toward the door, but stopped beside her as if to beg her pardon. Then suddenly he laughed and took her in his arms. "I shall have a kiss, at any rate," he said.

She struggled and struck at him with her hand as he drew her to him. He laughed again.

Suddenly another door into the big hall banged open, and Von Bredow, looking over the countess's head, saw Lament d'Arenberg, the count himself, the spy who ought to have been

in France, walk out. In his hands, D'Arenberg held a rifle. Twice he raised it to his shoulder, and twice lowered it.

Through Von Bredow's mind the thoughts raced quickly. He held the countess tightly—his only chance at that point-blank range. He saw D'Arenberg blink—the man had been concealed somewhere in the dark. Then D'Arenberg stumbled slightly against a chair.

Von Bredow threw the countess toward him with all his might, and dashed out into the night. He had twenty yards' start before D'Arenberg began to shoot.

Von Bredow heard the two first shots sing overhead; the third and fourth ripped through the bushes at his side. He was in the saddle when he felt the fifth hit him—a solid blow on his left arm just above the elbow. He felt the arm go limp.

For half a mile Von Bredow galloped at full speed; then he reined in his horse. Even yet the intoxication of adventure upheld the chance-taker's spirit. He laughed aloud, although his arm was numb. It was fine to be a man.

Then followed the less pleasant second thoughts. Of course Lament D'Arenberg was on his way to Switzerland, probably traveling faster than he was himself. That was amusing, but on the other hand, how was he to explain this bullet-broken arm—, which was aching steadily now, like a sick-room clock,—to Major Stein? Would Stein believe, or pretend to believe, that he had been shot at from behind a hedge? Never in the world. This was the very chance for which Stein had been looking for some time. An investigation,—court-martial.

The chance-taker rode slowly on down the wooded lane, thinking unpleasant thoughts. His arm throbbed rhythmically. He began to feel an unaccustomed faintness. He wondered if it were possible that the bone was shattered beyond mending. Slowly and more slowly he rode, for each step which his horse took seemed to club the wounded arm. He felt the warm blood dripping from his finger tips.

Suddenly he was aware of a sound which at first he confused with the pain of his throbbing arm. The unmistakable rattle of a distant machine gun brought him back to full consciousness. He heard the uneven crack of rifles, the lower boom of field guns. Somewhere there was an infantry fight in progress and unconsciously he quickened his pace down the village road toward the quarters of his battalion.

Round a bend in the road a lighted flare in the middle of the village square two hundred yards away, half blinded him, and he reined in his horse. The square was full of men—the whole battalion—in company formation. He saw the squat figure of Major Stein advancing between the lines of soldiers. He heard the order given and repeated, "Form fours," and a thumping of feet followed in obedience to the order.

Then he heard Stein's voice ask, "Where is Captain von Bredow?"

No answer. "Who's in command of B company?" Stein shouted.

"I'm in command," came the answer from Lieutenant Getz.

"Then take command!" roared the major violently. "Bredow's off with the women again. You're in command until I relieve you, Lieutenant Getz!"

Then suddenly Ulrich von Bredow's senses became alert. He tried to shout, but only a hollow sound ensued; then he jumped from his horse, struck his wounded arm against a swinging stirrup and fainted dead away among the little weeds of the roadside ditch.

When he regained consciousness, it took him some seconds to realize what had happened to him, and what he was doing in a roadside ditch. But his aching arm brought him back to a full realization, and he looked at his watch. It was still only ten o'clock. There was no moon; no light was burning in the village square; his horse had disappeared.

Groping and stumbling he went down the village lane. All was silent among the houses; not even a sentry had been left behind. He painfully made his way to the cottage in which he had been quartered, lit a match, found a bottle of brandy half full, and drank eagerly. Almost immediately the stimulant took effect. The pain ceased; his thoughts became curiously clear; he felt a peculiar lightness such as he had never experienced before.

The one thing now necessary was that he should find his battalion; once at the front his wound would need no explaining. It was just two miles to that part of the Altkirch section where his regiment was in action and where his own battalion had undoubtedly gone. He filled his flask with what was left of the brandy, and walked off at a rapid stride.

Within a few hundred yards the village lane joined the main thoroughfare to Altkirch, and he found this road crowded with ammunition trains, litter-bearers, and travelling kitchens. Beyond Altkirch, on the encircling rim of the distant hills, he saw the explosions of the German shells which sought the enemy's batteries; and in the plain between the lines, rocket after rocket burst, and with its parachute illuminated brightly the quiet fields of rye. The rattle of machine guns and rifles was borne up to him unevenly, continuously, on the breath of a gentle breeze. The first fight in four months was in progress on the Altkirch plain.

Suddenly Captain von Bredow perceived another officer at his side, a captain-doctor, going the same way.

"My detachment's following," the doctor said. "This was unexpected, wasn't it?"

"Yes," replied Von Bredow. "Do you know who is attacking?"

"We are," the doctor said. "It's only a local engagement, I think. It was meant as a surprise, but it looks now as though the French had more troops there than the general supposed. The wounded seem to be coming back pretty thick."

"I must find my battalion," said the captain.

"Let's see," the doctor went on, "It's pretty dark. You're in the cavalry, aren't you?—the Thirty-second, in front of Altkirch? The fight's on the other side of Carspach, as far as I can tell. I doubt if you're engaged."

"I hope not," replied the captain, "till I get there."

"Why aren't you with your com-

pany?" asked the doctor, with sudden suspicion.

"We were in reserve," the captain answered. "I was sent to Muhlhausen this morning."

"You're wounded," exclaimed the doctor, and stepped away. "They're not fighting at Muhlhausen are they?"

"I was shot from behind a hedge," Von Bredow answered, sullenly. "It's nothing."

"It's nothing to me," the doctor said. "Here's the Carspach road, and there's the Altkirch road. Good-bye." The doctor saluted.

Von Bredow returned the salute, and watched the doctor's suspicious back disappear into the darkness. Who, after all, was going to believe his story of being shot from a hedge? The chance-taker's thoughts were growing very sombre. The effect of the brandy was beginning to die.

He stumbled on into the town of Altkirch, through the town, out toward the communication trench beyond. He was now within a few hundred yards of the front line positions; the sound of rifles and machine guns came to him, not in front, but from the direction of the village of Carspach, and he was assured that his own regiment was not yet in action. An odd bullet or two from the French lines whirred past him as he entered the communication trench, and he smiled in the darkness of the tunnel. He would now say it was one of those odd bullets that had wounded him.

Through the mole-hill city of the trenches—trenches he knew well—he groped his way, passing occasional detachments of litter-bearers or carriers of supplies. At length he reached the second line, which was filled with waiting infantry. He stopped for a moment beside a corporal; he felt faint and finished the brandy in his flask.

Only a few bullets were singing over the trench. He stood up. In front he could see the first line trench packed tight with troops. "Where's B Company?" he asked the corporal.

"Ahead," the corporal replied shortly.

Suddenly, without warning, he heard a whispered order, saw the flash of a sword—Lieutenant Getz's sword, no doubt—and in a second the men in the front line were clambering over their sand bags. B Company was advancing to the attack.

The chance-taker now knew what he had to do. He dashed down the communication trench, pulled himself over the parapet among the last of the men, and fell in the wire entanglement in front. When he succeeded in freeing himself, everyone had gone; he followed through the hole in the wire. Suddenly the French machine guns opened fire. He heard Getz's voice, somewhere ahead, raised to give an order. He started to run. "I'm in command," he yelled. "I'm in command, Lieutenant!" He stumbled in a shell hole and fell. As he tried to rise, he heard a sound like the rumble of an earthquake, and saw, up in the air, a black cloud of dirt, and smoke, and stones, and men, and the next moment felt a heavy blow on the head and knew nothing more.

When the captain regained consciousness, he found himself in a field hospital. For some time he lay still, collecting his thoughts. At length he beckoned to an orderly.

The orderly saluted, went away and soon returned with the doctor. "How seriously am I wounded?" asked Von Bredow.

"Nothing at all," the doctor replied; "a crack on the head and a clean break of the left arm, snapped by a bullet. The wound's healing already. You'll be out of here in a few days. By the way, the colonel wants to see you."

The doctor disappeared and Von Bredow's spirits began to rise, but he observed the entrance of the colonel with some anxiety.

"Congratulations, Captain von Bredow," the colonel said. "Do you know you are the sole survivor of your company? The French exploded a tremendous mine—the whole plain was mined—and you were blown back nearly fifty yards. We took the French positions, but the whole Thirty-second suffered severely. Stein was killed. I've recommended you for promotion and for the Iron Cross."

Von Bredow did not answer. He was overcome with emotion—though not the emotion which the colonel suspected. Finally he said, "I only tried to do my duty."

The colonel started to go. "You need plenty of sleep," he said, "and rest—for when you return you will be in command of the battalion."

Von Bredow attempted a salute, and let his head fall back.

A week later Major von Bredow mounted his horse, the Iron Cross pinned to his tunic, and rode gaily toward the Chateau d'Arenberg. Behind him followed a corporal and two soldiers. The chance-taker was playing his game a little more prudently; he meant to be intensely disagreeable; and it was always possible that Count d'Arenberg, who ought to be in France or in Switzerland might, notwithstanding, be concealed somewhere about the house or grounds.

Major von Bredow left his three retainers outside the door of the chateau. He clanged the knocker as loudly as before, and as before it was the pretty countess herself who opened the door.

She looked at him, glanced at the body-guard, and smiled.

"I notice you have not come unprotected today, dear Captain von Bredow," she said. "And your arm—it is wounded? No doubt there has been an engagement?"

"One must expect wounds in war, dear Countess," replied the chance-taker, softly, "as well as in love. And, of course, wounds have their recompenses." He smiled and touched the Cross.

The countess's blue eyes opened wide and she smiled. "So you pretended you were hit in action," she said, slowly and deliberately. "What a really accomplished blackguard you are, Captain von Bredow!"

"Major, not Captain, von Bredow," replied the chance-taker, urbanely, "and I was in the action, thanks to you, just soon enough not to be killed. You see, I do indeed owe you and your husband a tremendous obligation. I was the sole survivor of my company."

The countess looked up at him. Her blue eyes laughed. In her plain summer dress, the wisps of yellow hair straying beneath her common straw hat, she seemed to Von Bredow more lovely, more desirable than ever.

"I saw you riding up the avenue," she said, "and wondered why you came—to find Count d'Arenberg, I suppose. Listen—" She paused, and even to Von Bredow her honest eyes carried conviction. "Listen, and I will tell you the truth. A search is useless, if you've come for that, for Lament has gone to France. He never was a spy; he is today a soldier—a French soldier. I shall stay here to take care of *maman,* and the children, and the house. You see, in spite of all, I trust you, although I'm sure I don't know why. Will you shake hands? Now go, and don't come back."

For a second the chance-taker wavered; a wave of feeling that was not sensual touched him, but only for a second, for such a feeling had no part in his code of life. In answer, he stretched out his unwounded arm and clasped her to him closely. "Do you suppose I could be satisfied with that?" he said.

She struggled to get free and her breath came hard. "At your peril," she cried. "This is at your peril! For God's sake let me go!"

"Never in this world!" exclaimed the chance-taker.

She struggled on dumbly, and at length she drew one arm free. Von Bredow held her still.

"Let me go!" she cried.

Von Bredow laughed. Suddenly before his eyes he saw the flash and glitter of something in her hand, felt a blow and a sting in his throat, staggered, and slipped to the floor. He saw her standing above him, and in her hand a dagger dripping red. Then before the chance-taker's eyes rose a mist; he choked; and death came to him like sleep.

The Countess d'Arenberg laid the dagger down beside him on the floor. She walked to the foot of the stairs, climbed up step by step, holding to the banisters. At a door she stopped and knocked.

"*Maman, Maman,*" she whispered. "Dress the children; we must go to Switzerland tonight."

Down the stairs again she stumbled, crossed the hall, and opened the door. Outside, the soldiers were standing at their horses' heads.

"Corporal," she said.

The corporal saluted. Her frail figure, back to the door, swayed a little.

"Corporal," she said, quietly, "Major von Bredow is going to spend the night. His orders are for you to return. I'll take his horse."

The corporal saluted and turned to his men. They mounted, leaving her, bridle in hand, and walked their horses down the avenue. The corporal grinned. "We might have guessed this," he said to his men. All three laughed.

The countess heard them. She tied the horse to a post, returned to the house and shut the door. And there she stood, beside the body of Major Ulrich von Bredow, the chance-taker who had taken his last chance. Sob after sob shook her frail frame. And as night fell, she knelt and prayed beside the lifeless rascal at her feet.

The Man From Indiana

BY MERDEN LAW

THE drugstore of Adolphus Halevy was of unusual appearance. No German silver and imitation marble soda fountain was in evidence, a miscellany of nameless toilet articles did not meet the prescription seeker's gaze, nor did young and practiceless physicians loiter there. In a way it was a place of mystery, although much frequented by a certain circle of the city's masculine population.

Mr. Halevy himself was short, fat and bald, of a manner peculiarly stolid and apathetic, and had a soul—the soul of the fabled Pedro Garcia. It resided in his pocketbook. He also had another name. As a dispenser of unhappiness he was widely known as "Shylock," and this unpopular appellation will be understood when it is stated that Mr. Halevy was, in fact, a loan shark and his unusual drugstore a mask for the more profitable operations of low finance.

Business had been good for several days, and Mr. Halevy was as joyful as he well could be considering his occupation when, one morning, a stranger presented himself and his card.

"Doubtless," said the stranger in a rather thin, high-pitched voice, "doubtless I speak with the proprietor of this—er—establishment?"

Mr. Halevy regarded him hopefully as a possible new fly for entanglement in an already crowded web, and his eyes, long trained to absorb and retain the dress and features of prospective clients, instantly stored away upon the retina of his mind the portrait of a man tall and gaunt, red of face and watery of eye, a man who wore glasses, sported false teeth and was clothed in black. He looked at the card that had been thrust into his hand and frowned.

"Potts, attorney at law," he muttered.

"Correct, my dear sir, correct," said his visitor. "A. C. Potts, attorney at law."

"No use for a lawyer, Potts," growled the shylock impolitely. "Collect my own debts—by a special process. My business is legitimate—" which he believed—"and unless you—er—"

"Potts, sir, A. C. Potts, attorney at law," prompted the stranger.

"Er—Potts, unless you want a loan. Fill up these blanks," and he shoved out a handful of that finely printed literature to which his victims by affixing their names signed away their rhetorically inalienable rights to the pursuit of happiness for an unnamed period.

"My dear sir, my dear sir," remonstrated Mr. Potts, gesturing with a long, lean forfinger. "Special process, tee, hee! A little joke," he added slyly. "Special process, I can imagine! But Mr. Halevy, my dear sir, I am here on a matter of considerable mo-

ment. You read my card? A. C. Potts, sir, attorney at law, of Linkport, Indiana, a fair city beside the Wabash. I seek, Mr. Halevy, I seek," and he thrust a hand into the breast of his shiny frock coat, "one Ambrose Welthammer, for whom I am intrusted with large sums of money."

"Don't know him," said Mr. Halevy emphatically, though a sparkle of interest appeared in his dull blue eyes at the mention of money, "don't know him."

"Possibly not, Mr. Halevy, possibly not, my dear sir, but in your business—"

"It's legitimate," interposed the shylock.

"True, I grant you, my dear sir. An institution, sir, for which, unlike some others, I have a high regard, a lofty regard, enabling as it does the poor man, whose name I regret to say is legion—drink and cards, Mr. Halevy, *and*, unhappily, women—to borrow on modest interest—um—that is, considering the risk, a sum sufficient to meet his immediate need. An institution, Mr. Halevy, an institution. But my dear sir, my business is of extreme importance and, as an attorney at law intrusted with numberless momentous secrets, is private. Locked in my breast, Mr. Halevy, are sacred confidences which could not be torn from me by the rack, an instrument of torture, as doubtless you know.

"I am a man, my dear sir, of few words and those the choicest. Have you no private office far from the maddening crowd's ignoble strife where we might retire for a space of time? I may say, Mr. Halevy, that I am empowered by my client, the administrator, to pay well, well mark you, for any information received."

At the word pay, Mr. Halevy awoke from his apathy. "My time's val'able, Potts, but I can spare you a minute," and he called a scaly-faced youth from the book cage to take his place in front, and led the way to the dusty back room where he conducted all financial operations of a delicate nature. After assigning Mr. Potts to a rickety chair, he took one of the same for himself.

"Now, Potts," he wheezed, "my time's val'able."

Mr. Potts mopped his red face with a gaudy handkerchief. "But not more so than mine, I assure you, my dear sir. I have a large and growing practice in the thriving little city of Linkport, Indiana, the fairest flower, sir, that blows in these broad United—"

"My time's val'able, Potts," intervened Mr. Halevy.

"Certainly, sir, certainly, and I am a man of few words. As I was saying, some five years since I removed to the city of Linkport, Indiana, and almost immediately, thereafter, became attorney at law for Mr. Zachariah Welthammer, the richest man we have, *had* I should say, for Mr. Welthammer is dead, of a lingering disease I am sorry to say, as he litigated considerable and my fees amounted per annum, sir, to the sum perhaps—"

"My time's val'able, Potts," interrupted Mr. Halevy.

"Yes, yes, my dear sir, certainly so, valuable. As I was about to say, Mr. Welthammer was rather close, indeed called by some a miser. A vile slander, sir, vile—we should say no ill word of the dead—and while he left much

property, I regret exceedingly to state, especially, sir, as his attorney at law, he made no will, dying intestate—a law term, Mr. Halevy—no will, my dear sir, but a scapegrace son, his only known heir, who left home many years ago—a misunderstanding over the amount of food consumed per diem—deserted his aged father, Mr. Halevy, and is said, said mind you, to be in your pleasant and sociable city. Indeed, my dear sir, it brings to memory the gemlike little city of Linkport, Indiana, beside the River Wab—"

"My time's val'able, Potts," remarked Mr. Halevy.

"Exactly, my dear sir, exactly, and mine. As I was saying, I seek Mr. Ambrose Welthammer. If in this city, where is he to be found you ask, and justly. Recall, Mr. Halevy, he is a spendthrift. Putting two and two together I deduce a saloon, a gambling house, a loan establishment such as yours, Mr. ——"

"My business is legitimate," said Mr. Halevy.

"Doubtless, sir, doubtless. As I was saying, I come to you as a leading member of our ancient profession. I ask simply and in few words, Do you know the aforesaid Ambrose Welthammer?"

"I do not," replied Mr. Halevy, getting up.

The attorney at law put forth a detaining hand. "My dear sir, one moment. A matter of grave importance, for which I am prepared to reimburse you."

Mr. Halevy resumed his seat. "My time's val'able, Potts," he complained.

"My dear sir, valuable, certainly. As I was saying, the said Ambrose Welthammer may have, indeed it is highly probable that he has assumed another name."

"What's he look like?" asked Mr. Halevy.

"Unfortunately, my dear sir, there is no photograph. His aged father was a simple man, sir, very, and cared nothing for the luxuries of life; but I have here a description furnished by the leading citizens of Linkport, Indiana, a city, sir—"

"My time's—"

"Yes, yes," continued the attorney at law hurriedly, and thrusting a hand inside his coat drew forth a sheet of paper. "'Description of the said Ambrose Welthammer,'" he read. "'Medium height, light hair, blue eyes, large ears and a nose of ultra-Roman contour.'"

Mr. Halevy ran over his mental photograph gallery without result. "Is that all?" he questioned.

"Well," said Potts diffidently, "I may say that he is known to have a strawberry birthmark on his left shoulder."

Mr. Halevy was moved to scorn. "Do you want me to bring all my customers back here and undress 'em?" he inquired.

"By no means, my dear sir, by no means, Mr. Halevy. But, for instance, a young man enters your—er—famous establishment, a young man, say, answering to this description—"

"Half the men in the world has that description," said Mr. Halevy impatiently. "My time's val'able, Potts."

"Certainly, my dear sir, certainly, valuable. As I was about to say, should you by chance, Mr. Halevy, chance let us say, meet a young man

answering to this description, communicate with A. C. Potts, attorney at law, Hotel Royal, this city, advising said party of the first part that I have with me for delivery, thinking perhaps he might be in want, the sum of five thousand dollars. I will pay you well, sir, well for this information, providing, of course, it proves to be the long lost heir at law. A matter of importance, Mr. Halevy, extremely so.

"In the meantime I will search the saloons,—infamous places, my dear sir, infamous. I may state I have made it a rule never to touch, taste or smell, except of course," he added hastily, "except medicinally. I have a slight cold at present which I am treating with a preparation widely sold in the city of Linkport, Indiana, a prohibition town, sir, strictly."

Mr. Halevy furtively pressed a button set in the wall behind his chair, a device for ridding himself of lingering visitors, and forthwith the scaly-faced youth appeared.

"You're wanted out front, Mr. Halevy," he whispered hoarsely.

Mr. Halevy arose without apology. "My time's val'able, Potts," he said. "If I see this Welthammer I'll let you know. Good day," and pushed the lawyer out of a side door.

Mr. Halevy consumed quite a little of his valuable time during the next few days in cogitating upon the subject of one Ambrose Welthammer and his inheritance, especially the latter. Twice he had noticed upon the streets young men responding fairly well to the description given by Mr. Potts, and finally one morning (an example perhaps of the drawing power of thought) a youth giving his name as Charles Edgewood and bearing a strong resemblance to the portrait sketched by the attorney at law, entered the drugstore to negotiate a loan. He had blue eyes, light hair, a Roman nose and large ears.

In taking his description for purposes of identification in case of future default, Mr. Halevy interpolated a question. "Any birthmarks?" he asked.

"Strawberry on left shoulder," replied the youth.

Mr. Halevy started. "Your name's Welthammer," he asserted severely.

"Guess again, uncle," remarked Mr. Edgewood flippantly.

Mr. Halevy pondered a moment over the intricacies of successful money getting. "How'd you like to be a heir at law?" he inquired at last.

"I'd be a grandma for money," said the client enthusiastically. "Show me."

"This way," directed Mr. Halevy, and led him to the back room.

Half an hour later they emerged, the young man smiling and Mr. Halevy rubbing his hands together softly. "Come around this afternoon about three," he murmured. "And remember, no talk."

"All under my hat, pal," said Mr. Edgewood, winking slyly, and passed out.

Mr. Halevy immediately called up the Hotel Royal and inquired for A. C. Potts, attorney at law. After a moment that gentleman replied.

"Hello, Potts," cried the shylock, "hello, Potts. This is Halevy. I've found the heir at law. Yes, yes; I'll bring him up at three o'clock. Yes. Now, Potts, now, my time's val'able,"

and slammed up the receiver. "Damn Linkport," he muttered.

About three o'clock that afternoon, therefore, Mr. Adolphus Halevy and his young partner in deceit were shown to Mr. Potts's room, and the attorney at law swept forward to meet them with a gush of welcoming words.

"Mr. Halevy, my dear sir, your hand," he cried breathlessly. "A pleasure, a pleasure indeed, I assure—"

"Potts," interposed Mr. Halevy with dignity, "that is the heir at law, this is Ambrose Welthammer. Look him over, Potts. See that medium height and light hair, them blue eyes and big ears, that Roman nose, and—he's got the mark."

Mr. Potts drew himself up and subjected the young man to severe scrutiny.

"There is certainly a strong resemblance," he said. "You have all the earmarks—er—no offense, young sir. You have the general appearance, my young friend. But gentlemen," he protested, "this is a matter of great moment. Be seated and let us proceed in an orderly and dignified manner."

Accordingly, Mr. Halevy and his youthful friend sat down. Mr. Potts coughed tentatively. "A slight cold, gentlemen," he explained. "My lungs are not strong. If you will excuse me, I have here a medicinal preparation much in vogue in Linkport, Indiana, a fair city, gentlemen, and prohibition, sirs, strictly. A most soothing effect upon the throat and delicate internal—"

"My time's val'able, Potts," said Mr. Halevy.

The attorney at law gulped down a mouthful from a slim, black bottle, which he immediately returned to an inside pocket. "Certainly, my dear sir, certainly. Valuable indeed, and mine. Now," he continued judicially, turning to the youth, "your name, young sir."

"Ambrose Welthammer."

"You were born in Linkport, Indiana? A privilege, sir, to have first seen the light of this contentious world in that calm and carefree city beside the River Wabash,—twelve churches and a broomcorn factory, young sir. Doubtless you have heard those beautiful words from the classic ballad, 'The moon shines bright tonight upon the Wab—'"

"My time's val'able, Potts," remarked Mr. Halevy wearily.

"My dear sir, my dear sir," remonstrated the attorney at law. "Valuable, certainly. But consider. A matter of grave importance, to be conducted in accordance with the rules of evidence, ossified wisdom of the ages. Order and propriety, Mr. Halevy, order and propriety. The law, though tender and considerate—um, to those who can pay of course—though tender and considerate, Mr. Halevy, is a jealous mistress. Justice, gentlemen, justice to all. Now, young sir, you were born in Linkport, Indiana?"

"Yes, sir."

"Your father's name was Zachariah Welthammer?"

"Yes, sir."

"A noble man, my young friend, noble, and extremely careful in money matters. He is dead, of a lingering disease. Now show the jury—er—show me the strawberry birthmark."

The youth removed his coat and collar, pulled down a corner of his shirt and disclosed the birthmark. Mr. Potts examined it carefully, then jumped up and clasped the claimant's hand warmly.

"Congratulations, Mr. Welthammer, congratulations, young sir, on your good fortune. It is a pleasure, my dear young friend, to deliver here and now a portion of your poor old father's wealth. Fearing you might be in need, I brought with me a goodly sum in currency," and pulling a black valise from beneath the bed he extracted a bundle of banknotes approximating in size, as reflected in Mr. Halevy's glistening eyes, a baker's loaf, and slapped down a receipt.

"Sign here, Mr. Welthammer," he said, indicating a dotted line.

The youth wrote the name of Ambrose Welthammer, and Mr. Potts placed the roll in his hands. "Five thousand dollars, young sir, fifty one-hundred-dollar bills, a sum sufficient to have boarded, lodged, clothed and amused your poor old father for a hundred years."

The young man looked at the money incredulously. "If it's good, it will last me about a hundred days," he remarked.

"Mr. Welthammer," exclaimed the attorney at law aghast, "a hundred days! Consider, my young friend—"

"If it's good," interrupted the putative heir. A thought struck him and he ran through the roll rapidly. "Gimme back that receipt, Potts," he cried. "This is some skin game. I'll bet this stuff is phony."

"Phony, young sir, phony!" returned Mr. Potts. "Nonsense, Mr. Welthammer, nonsense. I only wish I had a trainload like this roll of yours."

"Don't be a fool, er—Welthammer," said Mr. Halevy testily. "Take your money and let's go."

"Surely, Mr. Welthammer," cried the lawyer, "surely you will return with me to Linkport, Indiana, a fair city, sir, fair; to your ancestral acres beside the River Wabash. As your attorney at law I urge this course upon you. Reflect, young sir. The sunlight of that public approbation which ever shines upon a conjunction of youth and wealth;—some beautiful girl, love, marriage, a happy home, flowerlike children—"

"Nix, Potts, nix," said the youth roughly. "No wedding bells for mine."

"And my time's val'able," remarked Mr. Halevy, who paced the floor nervously.

Mr. Potts drew forth the gaudy handkerchief and wiped away a tear. "Your hand, my dear young friend," he muttered brokenly. "I grieve, Linkport mourns. Farewell, young sir, farewell," and wringing his client's hand he turned away to hide his sorrow.

Mr. Halevy and the heir eyed each other questioningly an instant, then passed silently out of the room and from the hotel, and with furtive glances hurried toward the unusual drugstore. Arrived in the dusty back room, Mr. Halevy was his own man again. "Now, Hedgewood," he began—

"Edgewood, pal, if you don't mind."

"Well, Edgewood, then," he continued, "my time's val'able. Hand over my half of them notes."

Mr. Edgewood pondered a moment,

then slowly counted out twenty-five of the bills. "See here, Halevy," he said, "you know if I go sportin' around this man's town with a pocket full of century notes, somebody will think I've robbed a bank; and if I get pinched it's all off with Uncle Shylock and little Willie. You've got to change this for me."

Mr. Halevy considered the situation thoughtfully. "Well," he admitted, "mebbe you're right. We don't want any pinches."

Going to the vault, he scraped together twenty-five hundred dollars in small currency and gold and exchanged with his youthful partner. Mr. Edgewood hastily filled all his pockets and stepped to the side door. "Bye-bye, uncle," he whispered. "Don't take any wooden nickles," and disappeared.

The following morning about eleven o'clock, a short, fat man, bald and hatless, breezed into the Hotel Royal like a miniature cyclone and rushed up to the clerk. In one pudgy hand he waved violently a banknote and with the other tore madly at his collar.

The clerk leaned forward urbanely and, in accordance with lifelong habit, relieved his visitor of the money. It purported to be a hundred-dollar bill, but across its face in large red letters had been stamped by some bank the word "Counterfeit," and sorrowfully he handed it back.

"Potts," gurgled the short, fat man. "where's Potts?"

The clerk ran a ladylike finger down the register, then explained sympathetically that Mr. Potts, accompanied by a young man with blue eyes, light hair, large ears and a Roman nose, had departed hurriedly the evening before for that mysterious locality commonly described as parts unknown.

The short, fat man thrust the bill into a pocket where reposed its forty-nine brothers, and turned sadly away. Like a veritable magnate of (let us say) oil or meat, he had contributed a large sum, relatively speaking, to the cause of education—self-education, experience if you will, and again, like his more famous colleagues upon the higher planes of finance, he immediately advanced the margin of profit. Kerosene, sirloins or salary loans, it soon comes back.

Cupid, Mind-Reader

BY GUY D. WILSON

IN spite o' the clever stuff that's bein' pulled nowadays, it ain't often many o' the dear public actually believe there's such a thing as a' honest-to-gosh mind-readin' act—and there ain't, so far as I know. Still, most o' 'em will agree, after witnessin' a real artistic demonstration, that some of it's entertainin', and therefore has its points.

If you ask Fred Archer—him that owns about half the saw mills and lumber lands o' the Southwest—he'll tell you that mental telepathy is there with bells on.

The first time I ever saw Archer was in Kansas City. I was makin' openings for the "Statue Turned to Life" show with the Rogers-Decker Carnival company. You see my bazoo is what always got me by. Spieling 's my line.

The illusion was new then, in fact it was the feature o' the midway. O' course everybody knows how it was worked,—a pane of glass between the audience and the statue; when the lights were dimmed out behind, the glass acted like a mirror and reflected the girl, standing in the wings. The effect was a slow change from the statue to a living young woman, and back again, when the system was reversed.

The show carried a swell front and the setting in Oriental style was elaborate. Nanette Powers, as pretty a bit o' femininity as ever faced a' audience done the posing. She was the daughter o' old man Sam Powers, owner o' the show, and was as near perfect in every way as she was in looks.

Whenever we made an opening, Nanette came out in front and stood on the bally stand with a Hindu gink who made passes and stalled while I got in my spiel about Oriental mysticism, and so forth.

The carnival showed in Kansas City under the auspices o' the lumbermen, who were holding a convention o' some sort. About the second night o' the week's stand, a bunch o' 'em stopped in front o' our show to hear the bally-hoo. They wore their delegates' badges is how I knew who they were.

I noticed one big fellow with a good face and a pair o' shoulders about three feet across. He was Fred Archer, I found afterward. They say he made the all-American football team as tackle, whatever that is. I don't know anything about these here college athletics but I got money that says he was a plumb good tackle. Archer went inside with the crowd after the first bally-hoo and stuck while we pulled in enough people for a show. The next night, when we made the first opening, he appeared alone. I couldn't help but notice him, for he was one o' those fellows who would attract attention in any crowd.

I guess he met Nanette through

some o' the local committee o' lumbermen in charge o' the carnival, for a few nights later he was with old man Sam and the girl when they came out for the night performances. The sort o' thing, ordinarily, ain't a good sign in the show game, but with Archer it seemed different. When I saw him talking to Nanette I knew he wasn't simply passing away his time. During the rest o' the stand at Kansas City, Archer came and went from the lot with Nanette every day, usually chaperoned by old man Sam. Nanette's mother had died when she was a kid.

The carnival showed a week at Dallas, Texas, after the Kansas City date, but the cotton crop was a failure and the stand was a bloomer, so we made a jump to Denver and Archer showed up on the lot the very first day. He stayed until the getaway. For several months, while we played the West, he appeared now and then and I knew that he was in earnest if I had any doubts before. I didn't regret it, for I had learned that Archer was making good in the lumber business, and while I'm not saying anything against the show game, there's better places for a girl like Nanette.

Archer managed about a dozen saw mills belongin' to his old man, Joseph B. Archer, scattered through three states. The Archers owned a swell home in Memphis and were among the aristocratic families o' the South.

Things went along all right with Fred and Nanette until we made a week's stand in Memphis in midwinter. I learned, second hand, what happened. It seems Fred had waited until the carnival had got to Memphis to break the news to Old Man Joseph B. Archer o' his engagement to Nanette.

Joseph B. went straight up and landed flat-footed against the proposition of "a' alliance between the House o' Archer and a family o' vagabonds." What's more, he got hold o' Nanette and told her such a thing was "preposterous;" that it would ruin Fred and his people socially, and offered to buy Nanette off. That's where he started something. When Nanette got through, the old man didn't have quite such a high opinion o' his family pride, but a little higher o' Nanette's.

The girl wrote a letter to Fred calling the whole thing off "for the good o' all" and refused to see him. Archer did everything but actually kidnap Nanette to get her to change her mind, but she stayed put.

I signed up about this time for a season, making announcements in the big top for Ringling, and worked the whole season. It was the following spring that I read in a New Orleans paper o' the death o' Joseph B. Archer. The account went on to say that his son Fred would succeed him as the head o' the big lumber business and hinted at an engagement between him and a New Orleans society belle.

The following summer I put my "At Liberty" notice in a theatrical magazine, and got a wire from old man Sam Powers to meet him in Saint Louie. I found Sam gettin' ready to frame a mind-readin' act featurin' Nanette as "Xoria, the Great Egyptian Seeress."

I had worked the front in a couple o' mind-readin' acts in the big little time, but Old Man Sam was after the headline positions on the big time.

Framin' a mind-readin' act is like getting speedy in the Morse alphabet and learnin' the Jewish Talmud all at one time. Nanette and I had three months to get up in our stuff.

The system is as plain as A. B. C., after it's explained. The front worker takes an object from somebody in the audience, or gets a name, and gives the information he wants to give to the "medium" through a code, covered by a set o' questions and a line o' talk that seems harmless enough. Some o' the codes used are plumb crude, but we worked out one that I believe had anything else skinned to death in the profesh.

It took more "con" on my part than most, but I talk fast, and once I got into the system, it came sort o' easy. I spelled out everything with the first letter o' each word I said. When I wanted to throw in a word not needed in the code, I paused slightly. The pause was hardly noticed, but Nanette's ear soon got trained, like a telegraph operator's, and it was plain enough to her. Some front workers pause momentarily to give their mediums time to dope out their meanin', but none o' that for us. When I paused it meant something.

For instance, if somebody handed me a stick pin with a diamond in it I would ask, "*P*lease, *I*—have *n*ow—," spellin' out the word "pin," pausing before "have" to show it wasn't in the code.

"You have a pin."

I would break her then, "*S*ay—whether *t*his *i*s—"

"It is a stick pin." She wouldn't wait for all the spellin', jumpin' in when she was sure.

"*D*o—rather—may *I a*sk—"

"It contains a diamond." If there had been more than one diamond I would have given the number first. O' course we seldom spelled out a word after we got good, and for many o' the commoner things like watches, handkerchiefs, etc., that were sure to be handed to me, we used just a single word. For instance, if I got a lady's handkerchief, I simply said "Here" or "This," and Nanette answered promptly, "A handkerchief,—a lady's handkerchief." If it was a man's handkerchief I would break her after the first time she said handkerchief, as if not understanding what she said and demand, "What?" and she would say, "A gentleman's handkerchief." "What" or "What did you say" was for the masculine.

After we got up in the stuff we worked as fast as any team in the business and we always had our slower spellin' method to handle names and long stories o' lost articles, etc. We made a specialty o' these.

Nanette had changed a lot since I last seen her. While the show game had treated her well, she had wised up in the things of life; she wasn't the same little girl she had been when I had first worked with her. I almost knew her affair with Archer had been the cause o' much o' this change, without her letting anything drop to give me that opinion. Once when Sam and I were talking over old times he remarked that he had heard Archer was to marry a wealthy Southern girl, and I knew that Nanette had heard it, too.

We had the act in shape by Fall and signed contracts for thirty weeks solid over the Union time. After a Sunday

matinee performance in Chicago late in the season, I bought a couple o' Sunday papers. Lookin' for the theatrical page I glanced through the section the newspaper boys call the "Sob Sheets." There I saw a picture o' Fred Archer, with the headline, "Young Southern Lumber Baron In Chicago."

The story underneath the picture gave a sketch o' Archer's life and his quick rise. It must have been written by a woman, for it jumped into the sentimental stuff right off. "It is said that Archer fell in love with a beautiful young actress a few years ago but objection by Archer's father, now dead, put a stop to the romance." The article went on, hinting that Fred had remained a bachelor on account o' the affair, and although his engagement to a Southern belle had been rumored, it had never been announced. The article didn't spare feelings nor private history; it just laid the whole thing bare.

Sam and Nanette hardly ever read the papers so I put the one with the story about Fred into my pocket intendin' to turn it over to Sam. O' course I didn't know what good it would do, but the fact that Fred hadn't married kind o' lent truth to the newspaper hint that he hadn't forgotten Nanette.

I didn't see either Sam or Nanette that night until time for our act. I always made a short talk on mental telepathy to the audience before we began the demonstration. I asked all who wanted to locate persons who had disappeared, or articles that were lost, to write the names o' the persons, or descriptions o' the articles on slips o' paper which they retained. I told 'em to concentrate their minds on what they had written and we would "endeavor to aid them in their quests."

I don't divulge how we worked this, because we are talkin' about mind-readin' acts only, and there are other lines o' mystery stuff that depend on the same system, but I'll tell you this much—we never got round to the people who wrote on their own paper. Only those who used the pads furnished by the ushers had their questions answered. They kept the paper they wrote on, but not the pieces o' harmless lookin' cardboard that had been furnished for a writing surface. Now and then, in order to pull a sensation, we got a line on some person who came to the theatre, intendin' to ask some certain question. We had our own ways o' gettin' a line on them and what they intended to ask. Whenever we did and decided to put over a good effect, we warned the ushers and assistants not to go near them. By springin' the question a man had asked and answerin' it, when he knew well enough that he had written it on an envelope which he had put back into his pocket, we carried him and everybody in the house who knew him, off their feet.

Nanette kept her face covered, Egyptian fashion, all but her eyes, during the whole performance. A "committee" was called from the audience, early in the act, to fasten her eyelids with adhesive tape, and then to blindfold her. Nobody ever had seen her face on the stage, since the act was put out, and to create newspaper talk, she always wore a thick veil on the street and in her hotel.

On this particular night in Chicago, I made my lecture, explainin' that we would "endeavor to untangle as many mysteries as Madame Xoria's naturally high-strung nervous system would permit." I explained that the strain o' remaining *en rapport*—I pronounced it right—with the audience, often caused the madame to collapse before we were able to answer all the questions put to us.

Nanette always "collapsed" on a cue from me, when I had either run into a snag, or when I found the audience had about all they wanted. If there was any of the *en rapport* stuff, I was the gink who was in that condition. I can tell with my eyes shut when I'm holdin' 'em too long, or when I've got 'em where I want 'em. When I feel they're almost bein' lifted out o' their seats I get under just such a strain as I claimed for Madame Xoria. The legits lay their power to do this to their artistic temperaments. I claim it's a matter of experience.

After my lecture that night, we ran off our regular routine, throwin' in some comedy stuff with a few "plants" stationed through the house. These men and women were on our pay roll and when I reached one of them I asked Nanette some such question as, "Can you tell this young man which of two girls he shall marry?" and Nanette would answer, "Tell him to propose to the black-haired one; she has more money."

These "plants" got lines on lots of stuff from people sitting around them. In a box, on this night, I ran into a "plant." He handed me a business card and asked aloud whether Madame could tell him where he could locate the party whose name was on the card. I gave Nanette the code for this particular plant and got a laugh when she said, "I see a man with one elbow on what might be a counter; one foot is on an iron railing." She named a saloon in the Southside of Chicago, and gave the name on the card. In the meantime, I had read on the card, in the handwriting of the plant, "The big man in the box in front o' me has a watch with a woman's picture in the back." The plant evidently had seen the picture, when, for some reason, the man in front had done the unusual stunt o' openin' the back o' his watch, maybe absent-mindedly. Anyway, I saw a great chance to pull a good effect, for a man don't often parade the fact that he has a woman's picture in his watch, even if the picture happens to be that o' his wife.

I worked on until I reached the box ahead, and stepped in front o' the man the plant had indicated. He was Fred Archer. He glanced up and I knew he didn't recognize me, for I was in full dress and clean shaven. The last time he had seen me I was doin' bally-hoos in a bristlin' mustache and a Prince Albert. He hadn't ever seen much o' me anyway.

Archer wasn't particularly interested in our mind-readin' act, and made no move to pass me any article to be described. I leaned over and asked, "Will you please remove your watch from your pocket and hold it in your hand?"

Archer smiled and complied. He was with a couple o' other men.

"*W*hat, Madame?" W followed by "Madame" was watch.

"A watch."

I broke her for the masculine, "What?"

"A gentleman's watch."

"Please, if—you can tell us—"

"It contains a picture." I didn't break her, so she knew it was the feminine and continued, "The picture o' a lady."

I took the watch from Archer and snapped the case open. The picture was that o' Nanette.

"The number o' the watch is—" Nanette continued.

Our code for numbers was simple. A was for 1, B for 2, etc.

"A'right," I said.

"The first number is two," she said incorrectly, for a chance for me to give more code.

"Be careful."

"1—2—3."

"Correct as far—"

"3—1—6. The number o' the watch is 123,316."

"Say—whether—the—gentleman is—married—or not," I ordered, spelling out the first syllable o' the word "single."

"He is unmarried," Nanette answered.

"Name, please—o'—the—lady—whose—picture—"

Usually, when we called names it was in answer to written questions. If there was any danger o' causing objection, I simply gave Nanette the code for the initials, which I did this time.

"I seem to see," said Nanette, in a droning voice that sounded as if she were in a trance, "the initials N and P. The lady's initials are N. P."

"Is that right?" I asked Archer. He nodded.

"Fine," I said, "and—his?"

"I see an L—no," she stalled, "an F and an A."

I saw Nanette clutch her hands. A surprised look was on Fred's face. He was wise though, and wasn't easily convinced. He probably thought we had a line on him before he came. Then I got a' idea. I didn't know how it would end, but even if it didn't end like I hoped it would, I knew it would be one big effect anyway, so I said to Fred, loud enough for those around to hear, "A tremendous influence is at work. The madame feels that she can aid you. You are anxious to find a party—the lady whose picture you have in this watch. Are you willing that she should help you?"

Fred looked at me blankly and nodded. You could've heard a pin drop in the house. They had tumbled that something big was on.

"A request—Madame, can—you help—by ending—a—search—so—far—without result?" I spelled out Archer's name.

I saw Nanette make a movement with one hand, toward her throat, which she often made when I gave her the "collapsing cue," but I knew she was not faking this time. I took off the code by our method of dropping the word "madame" and spoke sharply and loudly, "Xoria, this gentleman is anxious to locate a party for whom he has been searching for years. Please give him some indication, some sign, that you can do this. Can you describe the last time he saw the party for whom he is searching—some word—or some act that he will remember?"

Fred was leaning forward by this time, clutching the arms o' his seat

with both hands. Not a person in the house but was keyed up to the point that meant we had 'em, but I wasn't payin' any attention to that. I was playin' a bigger hand. I had challenged Nanette and I hoped she would hold together and be game. I believed she was too good a performer to lose this chance to pull a big effect, even if it tore into her very heart and I knew it did. She knew that Fred had not married and that he was looking for her. What would she do?

Finally I saw Nanette get herself together with an effort.

"I see," she began, in the same trancelike voice, "a wide river. It is in the South. It is winter, but even at sunset, the weather is pleasant. A couple are watching the last rays of the sun as they sparkle over the broad surface of the sluggish stream. The river is—the Mississippi. 'I shall tell him tomorrow,' the man is saying, 'and when I tell him what a fine little girl you are, he won't object.' The man takes a rose from several he had given her. He continues, 'Darling, when all is ready I will send you this rose. When you receive it you will know it is all right.' They turn from the river as the sun goes down. The rose was never sent." Nanette spoke low and slowly, "Ask the gentleman if he believes. And does—he still want to find—the party?"

"Yes." The word fairly burst from Fred, and was heard all over the house.

Nanette leaned forward, and in spite o' the blindfold over her eyes, there was no doubt about "a tremendous influence" being at work, as she said, "Then send the rose to the hotel B—to Nanette," and she arose from her chair, clutched her throat, as I had seen her do a hundred times before, and collapsed, but without her cue.

Yes, it was the greatest effect we ever got. A dozen newspaper reporters were at the hotel all that night and next day, but orders from Nanette covered the whole thing up.

Fred delivered the rose—withered, but fresh with its message.

Think of the publicity we missed. Three months later I started out with a new "medium," using the same old code.

I spent last Christmas in Memphis playing a new role—that of Santa Claus. Albert Chester Archer is three years old now. He was named for me; Albert Chester's my monicker.

The Revolution

BY HORATIO WINSLOW

IF Mrs. Spreek had known what was stewing in Mr. Spreek's brain she would never have started toward the Café Espanol, Hotbed of Revolutions. But nobody in the world would have suspected honest, methodical Mr. Spreek of such a thought. During twenty peaceful years of married life, had not Mrs. Spreek remained loyal to him, and honest, and trustworthy, and good-looking? And yet, at this most critical moment (and in spite of all these things), Mr. Spreek planned, not a mere rebellion, but a Revolution with a capital R.

Washington crossed the Delaware in the middle of the night. The Spreeks were about to cross the main thoroughfare of New Orleans in the middle of the day—a far more hair-raising adventure.

"Take your hand off my sleeve; I don't need any help." (It was with these stock phrases that Mrs. Spreek always started her crossings.) "Don't try to help me. Keep your hands at home, if you please." Flurry-skurry, slap-dash, she was off on the first lap of her excursion.

She got there, though incidental to her getting there the driver of a motor-truck had to put on the brakes so hard that he turned purple both as to face and vocabulary.

"Elmer!"

She poised at the near edge of the Canal Street car tracks, part way over, imperious, commanding.

Now was the time for Mr. Spreek to escape, while she hung in midstreet. Now was the moment to lose himself quietly in the crowd. For this supreme second he had been gathering his nerve all morning. It was now or never. He stepped toward the shelter of a cigar store.

"ELMER!"

He halted short. His eyes turned guiltily to hers. Lost! Like a bird drawn by the magnetic stare of a snake, Elmer maneuvered his way through the traffic till she could seize him. Then, Elmer in one hand and her umbrella in the other, Mrs. Spreek spanned the gap to the farther sidewalk in a series of short but brilliant charges. Imagine a headless hen trying to save a favorite nest-egg from a chicken-hawk and you have the picture. Nor did the inward rage which always consumed Elmer on these occasions help matters.

Two conductors suffered narrow escapes from heart failure; a boy on a motorcycle added sixteen gray hairs to his head; a man in a racing auto acquired Permanent Chills down the spine.

But the Spreeks went unscathed. Under the pilotage of Mrs. Spreek they reached the other side without so much as a broken shoestring.

"Now," said the masterful Mrs. Spreek, settling her hat, "now, we'll see what this famous Café Espanol is

like, and then we'll go back to the hotel and nap till dinner."

Mr. Spreek said nothing, but in his soul he knew the days of his submission had ended. "Those revolutionists at the Café won't have anything on me," he muttered grimly. "Before she starts back to the hotel, I'm going to make a getaway or die trying."

As Mr. and Mrs. Spreek entered the Café Espanol from Bourbon Street, "Beef" Mullen leaned excitedly across the table. Indeed, he moved with so little regard for consequences that he came near overturning the pale pink drink at his elbow.

"Manny," he said to the brown-skinned personage opposite, "that big boob over there—the one coming in with the lady—gives me an idea. You say you can't get the natives on the job because of the fever. All right. Here's a scheme to get white men. Get 'em right here in New Orleans and in less'n twenty-four hours. And it won't cost us a jitney except for their keep. We'll fit up hammocks on the 'Lucy R.' and send 'em down with our grading outfit. I'll call up Ike and get him to turn his gang loose right away and round up the suckers. Never mind how! As soon as I telephone Ike I'll be back and explain."

But General Manuel Lacarazo, President of the Santa Maria Central American Railroad Construction Co., was listening with only one ear. Many a woman is handsome at thirty-eight. Mrs. Spreek was. Many a woman follows the styles, even though she lives in as small a place as Shawness. Mrs. Spreek did. Moreover, something was happening.

Like a flash of inspiration, the vision came to Elmer of a ridiculously simple path to freedom. Before the waiter approached to take the order Elmer arose.

"Suppose you let me have some money," he whispered confidentially to Mrs. Spreek. "I just remembered that I saw a mighty interesting headline in that extra the newsboy was selling."

Mrs. Spreek extracted her black purse from her bag, unclasped it, and handed Mr. Spreek the smallest coin from its purlieus.

Curling his moustache, the general smiled ingratiatingly at the unprotected female as Elmer vanished through the door.

Quaint are the devices of destiny. If the Spreeks had not dropped into the Café Espanol, very probably Mr. Spreek would have ended his life as a happy grass-widower in Sedalia, Mo., or Waco, Tex. Also, it is quite probable that Beef Mullen's brilliant scheme would have mouldered in the pigeon-holes of his brain, unwept, unhonored, and unsprung. And without the shadow of a doubt, no twinge of desire would ever have stung General Lacarazo's breast at the memory of Mrs. Spreek's matronly beauty.

But as it was, well—

A shudder of unholy joy shook Elmer as his feet touched the sidewalk. He did not yell his ecstacy, but, to the great wonderment of certain pedestrians, he did jump into the air and clap his heels together twice before descending.

As he jarred to the earth, he became serious. He must be off or he would

be captured before he started. He had taken a half-dozen steps toward Canal when his conscience pricked him. Without prelude he grabbed a passing urchin by the shoulder.

"Here's a dime," he said. "You skin over there into that restaurant, and you tell the lady that's sitting alone at the table that her husband's been called back to the hotel. Very important! Sent an automobile after him. Tell her she's to go back to the hotel too. Remember all that?"

The boy, having been sped safely on his way, Elmer continued his flight at double-quick, not feeling wholly safe till he was lost among the pedestrians that knotted Canal Street.

A detour to the nearest pawnshop left him watchless but with ten dollars for pocket money. Two doors farther down he managed to exchange his tourist clothes for a workingman's outfit, soft flannel shirt and all.

It was when Mr. Spreek emerged from the second-hand store that he came near colliding with one of those stockily-built "tough guys" who flourish so luxuriantly around fighting clubs and saloons. The latter took in Mr. Spreek from head to foot; surveyed his clothes, his big frame, and his big hands. Elmer had worked hard all the days of his life, even though the Trust had made him a hundredthousandaire.

"Hello, Mister," said the tough guy, "want a job?"

Mr. Spreek nodded. He was one of those twenty-five-hour-a-day, eight-days-a-week men. The thought of working made him tingle all over.

"It's a good job, all right, all right."

"Lead me to it," said Mr. Spreek.

"A good job, a good time *and* pickings," leered the tough guy.

"Pickings?"

"Surest thing ever." The tough guy came closer. "You've heard of Santa Maria, ain't you? Little republic down in Central America? Well, they got a revolution on down there and—sh-h-h! this is strickly on the q. t.—I'm working for the revolutionists, see? And they want soldiers, American soldiers, to come down there and fight. Are you on?"

Perhaps it was the awakening of some old boyhood ambition. Perhaps it was because the Revolution Idea fitted in so well with the state of Mr. Spreek's mind. Perhaps—

"You might get to be an officer," the tempter continued, "and that would be three or four hundred dollars a month gold—*and* pickings." He leered again.

"I'm with you," said Mr. Elmer Spreek, throwing consequences to the winds. "When can I join?"

The Lucy R., tramp steamer of a thousand adventures, lay moored to the docks. It was nine in the morning. At ten she would slip cables for the sovereign State of Santa Maria.

Though not to outward seeming a passenger ship, on this trip the Lucy R. was plainly specializing in passengers. Bedding littered her foredeck, while an open hatchway suggested quarters below. Moreover (Exhibit B, so to speak) certain of the passengers were to be seen slouching over the rails and bunched in tobacco-burning groups.

At first sight they seemed a motley crowd, yet closer inspection showed

two marks common to all. Their build and heft proved them capable of hard work, and their hands and faces proved that they had worked hard. Also, most of them were young.

"Ike" and his cohorts had done their task well. In less than ten hours the full quota of able-bodied suckers had been landed. In time the suckers would learn that they had not been enlisted to do battle, but to build railroads. They would find themselves as footloose as leased convicts, with small, chocolate-colored Santa Marians ready to shoot holes in the rebellious. But the suckers were blissfully unaware of this. With one exception, their faces shone full of cheer and they winked merrily at one another when they passed a big up-ended wooden box labeled "Shovels."

The one exception in this lighthearted scheme was Elmer Spreek. Forty takes a more serious view of life than twenty. Also, it was Elmer's morning after, and he was thinking things over. He was trying to justify himself. It did not come easily.

It is humiliating to reflect that your wife has made you stop work and has taken charge of all the funds, and is dragging you over the tourist trails as though you were an over-grown, under-witted infant, and is helping you across every crowded street nurse-girl fashion. BUT does that justify you in running away from her like a bad little schoolboy?

Suppose you made the Hundred Thousand over to her, suppose she is well able to take care of herself, suppose in her whole life she has never called on you for help,—even then are you—

At this precise moment, Mr. Spreek felt himself clapped on the back. It was a young blacksmith with whom he had talked the night before.

"Say, ain't it great the way we're kidding those port officers? Look at how the box there is marked. Shovels! Shovels your eye! That there box is full of rifles; the big guy, Mullen, was telling me so this morning. And down below we've got—"

"I'm going ashore," said Mr. Spreek with sudden determination.

"That's a joke. They won't let you off. We're going down stream in an hour."

"I'm going ashore," repeated Elmer. His chin thrust itself out as of old when he was boss of fifty men. He had made up his mind. Last night's letter was not enough. Even if life with her was impossible, he would do the frank, manly thing, and talk it over first. He hurried to the gangplank, where Beef Mullen and a red-haired Norwegian were standing guard.

Strangely enough, at the sight of them Mr. Spreek's aggressiveness departed. He coughed.

"I—I want to go ashore," he said apologetically.

"Oh, you do," said Beef Mullen, half shutting his eyes. "Well, keep on wanting, because you ain't going."

"I'm a free American citizen," began Mr. Spreek. But he was interrupted.

Beef Mullen, Vice President and Secretary of the S. M. C. A. R. R. C. Co. seemed to have lost that urbane good-nature with which he had greeted his recruits the night before. "Shut up and go for'ard," he jerked out. "Didn't

you sign that paper last night? All right, then, shut up or I'll shut you up."

Elmer's mouth opened. He turned. Then, in the grip of a sudden rage, he faced about and charged. But in trying to take by force what diplomacy had failed to win, he forgot he was one against two. He charged at Beef Mullen, but that rotund shanghaier leaped cleverly to one side, allowing him to run plump into the red-haired Norwegian. They grappled, with Mr. Spreek trying none too definitely for a low hold and a throw over the right hip.

But now Mr. Beef Mullen entered the game. Taking something from his pocket, he pressed its round, cylindrical end against an exposed portion of the Spreek abdomen.

"You go back," he growled. "You go back or I'll bore you. I got the law on my side and if I ain't you'll never live to find out. Leggo them hands and walk back and stay back. And by crock, if you raise any more row I'll get you before you can whistle."

Slowly, keeping time to the jeers of his fellow soldier of fortune, Mr. Spreek retreated. With a final command to the red-haired sailor, Beef Mullen strode into the cabin.

The cabin held one occupant, General Manuel Lacarazo, the same hardy veteran who, the day before, in the Café Espanol, had smiled ingratiatingly at Mrs. Spreek. But Time had changed him; he now had a black eye. He was staring into a small hand mirror and cursing softly.

"Now, Manny," Beef Mullen's voice was sharp. "forget it. You went up to her and tried to make a date without being introduced, and she copped you with her umbrella. I say, you had it coming to you, and you'd better stop thinking about it and get busy."

"Ha!" muttered the general, "sometime when I find that"—here he used an impolite Spanish word—"sometime when I get my hands on her, she shall see!"

"I tell you, forget it!" snapped Beef Mullen. "If I stay here and manage things from New Orleans this is our last chin together. Get wise. You're in charge of this bunch of roughnecks, and if you ain't careful you're going to have trouble. One tried to get away already. And if the suckers ever find out what they're in for—"

He stopped as General Lacarazo put a warning hand over his mouth.

"Sh-h-h-h!" the general said.

It was a woman's voice. She was expostulating with the man at the gangplank.

"My husband *is* here and I'm *going* to see him."

"*Dios!*" whispered General Lacarazo. "She is the woman. Bring her in." His fists knotted, while his cheeks burned a dusky red. "Bring her in."

Beef Mullen gasped with disgust. "For Gawd's sake, Manny, forget it. Keep her out. We ain't in Santa Maria; we're in the U. S. A. Leave her be."

General Manuel Lacarazo was on his feet, breathing hard with every ounce of the devil in him rampant. "Mullen, this is my business—mine. Tell that man to bring her in."

"She says she's got a husband aboard," objected Beef Mullen less vigorously.

"So!" said the general. "Well, *amigo mio,* when we drop the hook in Santa Maria her husband will not be aboard. But," he smiled viciously, "a ship's matron, she will be aboard. Tell the man to bring her in. She must not hear my voice."

Beef Mullen hesitated a moment. Then he turned to the open doorway.

"All right, Manny, just as you say. Olaf, it's all right. Let her come in here."

With a sudden start Elmer Spreek left the offshore rail, where he had marooned himself after his luckless encounter with Mullen's revolver. Yes, it was her voice! Shame overwhelmed him at the thought. She had come to get him.

She had come to get him!

A minute before he had wished nothing more than release from the ship; now he knew he would not leave the Lucy R. unless he were thrown overboard. She, the persuasive, dominant female, had followed him to drag him once more at her heels. Bitterly he berated himself for sending that last night's letter, in which he had not only told her of his going, but had revealed the route. If she managed to release him after he had failed to release himself, he would be doomed to the end of his days to follow her leading, like an overgrown, undermined infant.

She was going into the cabin now. Well, she would never find him. He would burrow as deep as he could get. He would hide in the coal bunkers. Crouching warily till she had passed out of sight, he made for the hatchway.

In his nervous desire for haste, he tumbled as his feet fumbled for the iron rungs. He missed the first, slipping to the waist. Suddenly, in the very midst of his scrambling, he froze stockstill. He stared blankly. The thing was incredible.

It was a scream he heard, a woman's scream—the frightened cry of the woman who was his wife.

She was afraid! *Her* voice was raised in terror! Impossible!

Again it came, and louder.

"Hel-l-lp! Elmer, help me!"

She was calling on him to help her. She wanted his help. The idea was paralyzing in its novelty. For a fraction of a second, unable to move, he clung to the hatchway, watching the apathetic postures of the men on deck.

"Hel-lp! Elm—"

But before the word was finished, Elmer's legs were moving like those of a galvanized frog. Now he was up, running across the deck, pushing aside those who blocked his path. At the door of the cabin stood Beef Mullen, pale over the anticipation of trouble. Incidentally, also, Beef Mullen was accompanied by his revolver.

But, revolvers or gatling guns, there was no more holding back for Elmer.

Beef Mullen did not have time to shoot. With every strong-ribbed muscle lending obedience, Mr. Spreek caught the revolver in both hands, while his right knee went so hard against Mr. Mullen's southerly suburb that the Vice President and Secretary of the S. M. C. A. R. R. C. Co. collapsed alongside the cabin. As for the revolver, that plunked down into the water between boat and dock.

Came now the red-haired Norse with his large, hairy fist. But Mr.

Spreek unloosed a wild swing with a large, hairy fist of his own at the far end. Mr. Spreek got there first, and Olaf, tasting the knuckles, tumbled. Very likely he would have risen and mixed matters again, for only rarely does the uneducated punch score a knockout, but it chanced that the back of Olaf's head had come in contact with an iron cleat. So he remained in a reposeful position while Mr. Spreek broke through into the cabin.

The general and Mrs. Spreek were still there; the general testifying his affection by contracting his fingers in such a way as to choke off Mrs. Spreek's air supply. Owing to her valiant struggle, the choking had just begun. But Elmer did not know this.

He commenced hurriedly but methodically, with no waste motion, as an efficiency man should, by jolting the general so hard that the hero of a hundred revolutions was forced to unlock his fingers to save himself.

"Yuh tin soldier!" grunted Mr. Spreek as his wife collapsed in his arms.

The general fumbled at a hip pocket. Dropping his wife across a chair, Mr. Spreek sprang for the gun. He did not get there in time to stave off the first shot, but he was quite in time to manhandle the shooting arm. As a result, the bullet flew out an open porthole, thudding hard into the big box labeled "Shovels" which, being nicely balanced, toppled over and burst wide open, revealing the fact that the contents were not rifles, but merely those humble tools advertised on the cover—in a word—Shovels. As the significance of the shovel deception dawned on the soldiers of fortune, symptoms of a riot became evident. But Mr. Spreek was too busy rioting on his own hook to consider any minor disturbances.

"Whatcha—thinkya—gonna—do—now?" he panted as he struggled with the general's fighting arm. Mr. Spreek had never studied wrestling, but his hold was a masterpiece. Either the hold or the general's arm had to be broken. It was not the hold. And straightway the general ceased having a desire to shoot anybody. Nor would such a desire have done him any good, for Elmer was now fondling the gun.

But as Elmer reached for the half-fainting Mrs. Spreek, reinforcements rushed up in the shape of two small uniformed persons of the color of tan automobiles. Evidently they had been sleeping, for they were dishevelled and awkwardly armed—one with a large rifle and the other with a small knife.

By this time, however, the Joy of Battle was not coursing through Mr. Spreek's veins. In its stead was the twenty-five-hour-day, eight-days-a-week spirit. He did not want to leave the job unfinished.

Inarticulately the general urged his bodyguard to combat.

"Come on," seconded Elmer, "and bring along your friends."

He tried the automatic, but a failure to press some secret spring negatived his trigger pull. So he hurled the revolver at the rifleman, thereby somewhat discouraging that warrior, and reached down for a chair to hurl at the knife-man. Unfortunately, though, the chairs on a tramp steamer are of the screwed-down variety.

Therefore, being a handy sort at makeshifts, Mr. Spreek closed briskly

on the knife-man, receiving nothing worse than a thrust that mortally ripped his left coat sleeve. Then, using this individual as a missile, he cast him across the cabin at the rifle-man, who, collapsing in turn, engulfed the general. All three now lay in a confused and cursing heap.

"Now," thundered Mr. Spreek, turning to his wife, "now you come along with me—and hurry about it, too!"

Mrs. Spreek obediently tagged after him as he trotted down the gangplank unmolested. Nor did they turn their heads to see the battle on deck with Beef Mullen, the captain, two mates and a handful of sailors, pitting themselves half-heartedy against one hundred and fifty furious soldiers of fortune. It was Revolution with a capital R.

Mrs. Spreek's cab had departed, so the pair walked hastily from the water front, escaping unchallenged the solitary policeman.

Not till they had passed a half dozen squares and stood at the edge of a quiet, untrafficked street did Elmer look around bewildered, at a sound he had never heard before. Mrs. Spreek was sobbing; actually sobbing.

"Elmer," she said, "when I got your letter I—I just had to come and tell you how wrong I'd been. I didn't mean to hurt you, Elmer, but, don't you see, you're the only child I've ever had, and until you sold your factory four months ago I never really had you. It was the first time I'd had a chance to mother anybody." She looked up at him through her tears. "P-please help me across the street, Elmer."

But Mr. Spreek's face was suddenly lighted with the joy of understanding.

"Say," he said, "haven't we been idiots, though? There's lots of room at home—too much! And right now, before I change my clothes, we're going to look up the nearest orphan asylum."

Half-Past Ten

BY A. L. TILDESLEY

"WHAT'S the child."

They sighed and shook their heads. One of them wiped her eyes on her faded shawl; the other passed a needle-pricked finger over Rhoda's short, brown locks. Apparently, it was very sad that she was "the" child. Rhoda backed away toward her grandmother's knees.

Old Mrs. Varden did not even look up from the coat-seam she was basting with the furious haste of the piece-worker.

Rhoda slid to the floor and took up the bit of soiled rag that did duty as "Meely," her beloved doll. She was accustomed to being left to her own devices.

"She doesn't know?" speculated one of the callers.

"Ain't it terrible?" countered the other, after a blank silence had convinced them that Mrs. Varden would not reply.

Rhoda took stock of them from beneath her straggling fringe of bangs. They were talking about her. What was it that she did not know?

Her grandmother bent over the endless seams, her lips drawn in until one could not see her mouth,—only a deep gash in the pallid face. The neighbors sighed again and murmured to each other. Curiously enough, it seemed that they were almost enjoying it—whatever it was. They had to sit on the little steamer trunk, because Mrs. Varden and the pile of finished coats occupied the two chairs. Why a steamer trunk? Rhoda had often wondered. There was never a reason for anything. The gas jet gave such a queer flaring flame because there was water in the gas. How did it get there? Another of those things you'll never know. Rhoda stealthily took a pin out of the coat on her grandmother's lap and began to dig the dirt out of the cracks in the floor, wiping them afterwards with the lower end of Meely. It was a fascinating occupation. Rhoda indulged in it whenever she was so fortunate as to have a pin.

Footsteps sounded on the stairs, and the two women on the trunk turned their eyes to the door. Rhoda scrambled to her feet, losing the priceless pin, and rushed to meet the woman who entered.

The younger Mrs. Varden was attired in a cheap, flashy, checked suit. There was a willow plume of a vile purple in her shabby hat. Long earrings—ten cent store variety—dangled almost to her shoulders. Her face was coated with a white and red liquid concoction that entirely obliterated expression. But her eyes had the red rims that betokened nights of weeping.

She greeted her child with an absent pat. It might have been a little dog that rubbed against her. Rhoda thought her mother surpassingly lovely.

"It ain't a bit o' use, Mom," the younger Mrs. Varden was saying, "Al says y' can't see the Guv'nor fer love or money."

Her mother-in-law did not pause in her work. Only a queer little shudder showed that she had heard.

"Ain't there nothin' we can do?" asked the woman in the shawl.

"Nope."

Young Mrs. Varden crossed the room to the unmade bed and sat down on it with a little groan.

"What time will it be, Lu?" persevered the other.

"Ha' past ten." She swallowed, hastily. "It was ha' past nine when me and Al come up the street. He's waitin' at the drug store for 'em to telephone him when it's—all over."

"Who'll 'phone him?" The callers were deeply impressed.

"One o' the reporters. They was hangin' 'round already when me and Al was there. This one was real decent. They wouldn't leave me see him, Mom!" She raised her voice plaintively, as she turned to her mother-in-law. "They wouldn't leave me say anythin' to him. There was a priest in with him then. This here fella says—this reporter fella—he says we didn't go *at* it right or they'd 'a' let me see him just once."

There was a little pause. Rhoda sat at her mother's feet and held Meely close to her bosom. The eyes of the visitors still held that odd, mournful joy. The elder Mrs. Varden threaded another needle.

"She don't seem to miss her Pop, does she?" said one of the sympathizers, indicating the child. "Don't she ever ask for him?"

Lu moved impatiently. "Sure, she misses him," she contradicted; "she ain't much of a kid for fussin'. There *is* somepin' you might do, now I think of it, Mame. Y' might rustle up a little gin fer me 'bout ha'-past ten. Now, Mom, y' needn't look like that! A little gin won't hurt me. Y'd better have some yerself. You might watch fer Al, too, if y' wanta, Mame. He's goin' to let me know if—if anything happens."

The two women departed, whispering.

At once Lu started up and began to pace the floor, suddenly garrulous.

"Al says it ain't a bit painful. He says it's all over so soon he won't hardly know what happened. We tried to get 'em to let me speak to him, but they wouldn't. They say he don't seem a bit sorry. He don't talk none—not even to the priest. That's like you, Mom. That's where he gets that from. Al kinda hoped we'd get at the Guv'nor after we heard he'd come to town, and we tried. He's stayin' at the Westwick. My, but it's grand in there! We waited fer a while in a room where the rugs was as thick as grass—an' little gold chairs! He's got an attack of grippe, they said,—the Guv'nor has,—but the man said it was too late fer him to act, anyway. That reporter fella was awful decent to us. He took my picture, and he says it'll be on the front page."

"Where's my papa?" asked Rhoda, suddenly.

Her grandmother looked down at her, slackening her needle without stopping it.

"Do you want him, Baby?" she asked, huskily.

Rhoda frankly did not want him,—a dark, gloomy man, subject to fits of rage, as she remembered him. She shook her head. Her grandmother sucked in her lips again and bent over the sewing.

The younger woman laughed harshly. "You see!" she shrugged.

"Wonder if Al's got any money," continued Lu, presently. "I'd really ought to have black after—after—"

"Why should Al give you any money if he had it?" demanded her mother-in-law. "He's done enough taking you all over town. What's Al to you? And Jim—any minute now."

"Al's a friend o' mine. He's all right, Al is. Y' needn't go thinkin' anything about us, neither. We're straight. Jim! Huh! What did Jim ever do fer any of us?"

"You let up on Jim!" returned the elder woman, almost fiercely.

"Yes, and why should I—whadda I owe to Jim?" Lu's voice rose shrilly. "Whadda any of us owe to Jim? Ain't he took all your money and brung you down to sewin' on them rags? Ain't he drank up every cent y' raised? Ain't he kicked that kid about so 's she don't care if she never sees him again—an' the Lord knows after ha'-past ten she never will! Ain't he made my life miserable? Ever see him spend a cent on me for ten years? No. He was too busy drinkin' and hangin' 'round them low saloons!"

"Hush! He's going to die."

"Yes, an' what fer? Fer shootin' down a kid not much older'n his own here. Just shootin' him down fer pure devilment."

"You don't know. He always said he didn't do it." The older woman's hands were shaking so that the needle traced a zigzag course along the seam.

"Oh, I'm tired o' pretendin' I think he ain't guilty. Gawd knows I've gone snivellin' to every Judge I could find, swearin' I had the best husband a woman ever had, and that he couldn't 'a' done a dirty trick like that—an' all along knowin' it was just like him! Bah! Didn't I cry like a baby to the Guv'nor's man this very night—all so's he could git out o' bein' punished for sompin' we all know he done? But I'm through. Al says to me, he says, 'You're a fool to take on about a fella that's been as low-down as Jim,' he says."

Rhoda began to whimper. She was not a child to cry noisily. Her mother reached under the bed for a battered tin box, took out a piece of cake, pale and soggy, and thrust it into the child's hands. Rhoda seized it and, having rubbed it across Meely's upper half, began to devour it.

"Jim was a dear little baby," put in his mother. "He had a dimple in one cheek—"

"Jim's used you mean, Mom. There goes quarter past ten. Wonder if that clock's right? Jim ain't been square with any of us."

"Jim never lied to me."

"No. But he didn't need to lie to us. We was all weaker'n him. He did what he pleased and anybody that tried to stop him—huh!"

"Jim said he didn't do it." Jim's mother drew in a sobbing breath. "Oh, it isn't fair! Why can't I do something? Why haven't I enough money to make them listen? If Jim said he didn't do it, I believe him. It isn't right to kill him for something

he never did! It isn't right!"

"He had a fair trial, all right, all right, Mom. Don't take on like that. Didn't I set down in the front row and do a Evelyn Nesbit over him the whole time? Oh, it was fair enough, two witnesses. My Gawd, Mom, don't take on like that! It ain't painful. Al says it ain't painful."

There was a silence, broken only by the long-drawn-out sobs of the older woman. Rhoda, Meely, and the cake, disappeared under the bed, fearfully. The young Mrs. Varden sat on the steamer trunk and gazed straight ahead of her, a hard little smile frozen on her face.

So the minutes dragged by.

At last the big clock on the square began to strike the half hour.

The grandmother threw up her head to listen.

"Oh, God, why don't *you* do something? He was my little boy—my baby! And he didn't do it, God! He didn't do it. He says he didn't do it."

"Don't, Mom, don't! It won't hurt him. Al says it's all over in no time. It ain't a bit painful."

The last stroke echoed along the deserted street. The old woman dropped her work and threw herself forward on the shaky table, racked with sobs. Her daughter-in-law strained her ears for the sound of Al's footsteps. It seemed a long time before she heard them—lagging along the pavement below, lagging up the broken stairway, stopping at the door.

"Fer Gawd's sake, Al—"

Al leaned against the door jamb and removed an habitual cigarette.

"All over," he announced, briefly.

"Did he ask—"

"Nope. Never a peep out o' him. It was all over in no time. Didn't have to give him extra juice, either—first volts done fer him."

"Y' hear that, Mom? It didn't hurt him. Don't take on so, Mom! It's all over. See, Al says it didn't take no time. Poor Mom, she's all in! Did he say anything to that priest, Al?"

"Said he didn't do it. Nothin' else. He didn't seem to be much interested, the guy said," replied Al. "We kin take the body if we wanta, in a ccupla hours."

The woman with the shawl tore into the room.

"Some fella wants Al at the 'phone down to the drug store," she panted.

Lu followed the departing Al down the stairs.

The room was very still. The old woman lay across the table, motionless, one hand hanging over the edge, like a dead hand. Rhoda peered forth, stealthily; then, growing bolder, crept a trifle nearer the door.

A rush of feet on the stairs, and Lu darted into the room, with Al at her heels.

"Mom! Mom!" she cried, wildly, "listen Mom! He didn't do it. You was right. Jim didn't do it."

The older woman raised her head. Her eyes looked dazed.

"One o' them witnesses—Mom, you remember the fella with the limp?—it was him done it. He grabbed Jim's gun and done it. They was all drinkin'. Jim was too drunk to remember anything."

"He wrote to the Guv'nor, special d'livery," broke in Al, "and then shot hisself. He was a dirty—"

"The Guv'nor never got the letter

till ha'-past ten. And he tried to reach 'em, but it was—it was all over. Oh, Mom!" she sobbed hysterically.

The older woman slowly clasped and unclasped her hands. A world of mute agony was in her face. Rhoda pulled at her skirts and she suddenly seized the child and crushed her to her bosom, burying her face in the rough brown locks.

Al ran his eye over them, callously.

"So that's the kid, hey?—and his Mom. Poor old gal, tough on her. But what you howlin' fer, Lu? Wouldn't it 'a' been hell if the Guv'nor had got that note sooner?"

Lu continued to sob. The woman with the shawl brought in the gin. Lu and Al drank, she still sobbing fitfully. Then she turned to the others. Old Mrs. Varden had taken up another coat. Her needle flashed in and out at a furious pace.

Rhoda was on the floor again with Meely. She was absorbed in a most fascinating occupation. She had found another pin.

Lu turned again to Al.

"If that's a extra them boys on the street are callin', I wisht you'd git me one," she said. "That fella said my picture'd be on the front page."

Wheeny Shifts the Climax

BY LOUIS SCHNEIDER

JUDGING by all the signs, Rope Kerrow held a good hand. His chair was tilted forward until all its weight rested on its front legs. The toes of his square shoes rested on the floor at each side. His short forearms extended along the edge of the table, and he held his cards close to his sweater as he squinted across through the blue haze of tobacco smoke.

Wheeny, who had been watching the scarcely noticeable movement of a mellow, yellow mess which stewed in a pan on the far corner of the stove, let his curiosity get the better of him. After working his owlish eyebrows several times in an undecided manner and twitching one corner of his loose mouth spasmodically, he slipped behind Rope's chair in furtive silence and tried to get a glimpse of the cards held by the other. Once or twice he moved as if ill at ease and about to back away, and his foolish face registered a vague apprehension; but—that hand must be worth looking at.

The square-ended stick of Rope's forefinger held down a greasy two-dollar bill which he had just kicked into the pot. The bared teeth of his stubbly, projected lower jaw gripped a much-worried black stogie which set at an angle that added a perky defiance to his grin of humorous speculation.

"That," said Rope, jiggling the bill a bit, "says y' ain't got enough in y'r mitt, squeeze it as hard as y' want to, as 'd call me in anything clost t' a whisper, even."

His opponent studied him a bit.

"'F y' had a big fist full," he ruminated, "y'd act shaky, an' coax me into puttin' in more kale. Y' ain't got nothin'."

"Try me, Cluck; try me."

"Got a notion to."

Cluck shoved a hand in his pocket—but it stayed there. He studied his hand a while, and then looked at Rope.

"Lemme see. I stood pat—y' drawed one—hmmm—"

"C'mon!" jeered Rope. "C'mon!"

"Stay with him, Cluck," advised the player at the left end of the table. "Out with y'r kale, an' call him."

"Aw—let him have it," interjected the player at the other end of the table. "I want t' get in on a nother deal. My luck was rotten this time—an' mebbe not as rotten as yours, f'r all y'r stickin'."

Cluck's nerve broke. He spat out an oath and slammed his cards on the table, face down.

Rope's forefinger crumpled the bills into his palm as he rocked back and with a thump brought his chair to a balance on its hind legs. He grinned in triumphant mockery, and still held his cards close to his sweater.

Wheeny squealed like a trapped rat. His movement to retreat had been too slow and, when Rope swung back, the right leg of the chair struck Wheeny's

left foot squarely back of the toes and pinned it to the floor. He twisted this way and that to free himself, but the chair held. With fear of Rope in his eyes he brought his sound of pain to a hiss of indrawn breath while he squirmed.

Rope winked at the other three, and then burst into a laugh.

"Some bluff. Looka here."

Without shifting more than a few ounces of his weight, he flipped his cards face up on the table. The others craned their necks.

"It's on you, Cluck," chuckled one. "Pair o' jacks—deuce, tray, four—all mixed. Whoop! Whadja have, anyway?"

He tried to face the bluffed cards, but Cluck swept them into the deck.

"It's on me, a' right," he admitted. "Nev' mind how bad. Wheeny, run up t' th' Dutchman's an' get us a bucket o' suds."

"Not much," broke in Rope and, without turning, he began to rock backward and forward on Wheeny's foot. "That's such a good pot, it's on me. An' don't take a bucket, Wheeny; make it four quarts. Get a move on y'. Shuffle 'em, Bill."

He rocked complacently on his seat and laughed once more.

"Some little bluffer, ain't I, Cluck, hey?"

"Oh, some, mebbe; I'll give y' that; but not such a much. Some day y'll fall down on some o' y'r bluffs."

"Yaaah!" gibed Rope, while Wheeny twisted and whined with the pain of the boring chair-leg; crouched and squeezed his calf and whimpered; rose and threatened voicelessly and spat like a cat. "Yaaah, listen t' y', Cluck! An' if y' was to ast me, I'd say he had a kick in that mitt o' his'n that 'd a knocked me stiff if he'd a even thought o' callin' me. Bah! It gives me a bad taste in my mouth. An' that reminds me—I ain't heard nothin' o' Wheeny flattin' it f'r th' suds yet."

He swung over and around, bringing the whole of his pivoted weight to bear on the chair-leg which rested on Wheeny's foot. Wheeny drew away as far as his leg would let him and his whimpering rose a degree. His sliver of a frame, close to the floor, seemed a mere wavering shadow of Rope's hulk.

"What t'ell!" jerked out Rope. "Didn't I tell y' t' get four big ones at the Dutchman's and get 'em quick? Well—register speed, see? Whatcha whimperin' about again, anyway, huh?"

He lurched forward and threatened with his open hand, and Wheeny was fairly forced into yapping like a coyote as he tried to get out of reach. He finally wiped a dew of sweat from his brow with his forearm, and fell to snarling. Rope dropped his eyes along the outstretched body and leg in great surprise. When they finally reached the imprisoned foot he stooped and peered in incomprehension.

"W'y—what th' —— O-o-h—I—beg—y'r—pardon,—sure!" he expanded in apologetic astonishment, but still he did not offer to move his chair.

"Y'-y'-y'—y'-y'-y' knowed it all th' time, damn y'!" gasped Wheeny in agony.

"What!" barked Rope, springing up.

Wheeny fell back full length and scuttled away like a trap-freed animal.

By the stove he cowered and nursed his foot.

"Hell," said Rope, swallowing his merriment, "I hope that didn't hurt y', but I ain't goin' t' stand y' cussin' me. Now streak it f'r th' hops. Four big ones, rec'lect—an' y' might take th' bucket along an' get a little f'r y'rself."

Wheeny sidled far around, got the bucket, and limped quickly for the door. A burst of laughter followed him down the darkness of the alley, and Rope's bull-like roar dominated it.

He stopped to shake a puny fist back. "Th-th-that—bunch! Th-th-that—Rope!" he exploded in a threat.

At the side door of the Dutchman's place he stopped. He looked back down the street, at the closed door before him, at the bucket in his hands, his brows working. Finally he relaxed his fingers slowly and the bucket clattered at his feet. He made an effort at squaring his shoulders as he walked away.

"I ain't goin' back," he told the night. "I'm done with th-that bunch, I am."

Yet he had not gone half way down the next block before he stopped short.

"Might 's well—get my share o' th' —suds, first," he mused. And he turned and went back and straight in at the Dutchman's, picking up the discarded bucket as he went.

"How much?" queried the bartender. "Gallon?"

"Yeah—no—well—"

"Hey, youse—out wid it! How much? Is it f'r Rope an' his bunch?"

"Ye-ah—gimme a—a quart."

"A quart! F'r Rope an' his bunch!"

Wheeny was in a panic. "A-a—q-quart—an' four big ones," he chattered.

"Dat's more like it," snapped the bartender, and set out the order. "An' git back, quick, 'fore Rope takes d' hide off o' youse."

Wheeny raced back into the alley as swiftly as his foot and his burden would allow. At the door he stopped to listen.

"It's funny," he heard Cluck saying, "how much soup y' c'n boil out o' a couple o' sticks o' dynamite, ain't it?"

"Looks like damn little, t' me," came the voice of Bill.

"'Nough there t' crack a dozen boxes, ain't they, Rope?"

"Dozen! I sh'd say so. 'Twon't all be used f'r that, though, 'f that dago of a Gliotti don't come through, like we wrote him. Hate to waste any of it on his dump but— Looks a little like stale beer, don't it? Say—"

He broke off abruptly, and footsteps came toward the door. Wheeny slid off the end of the step and crouched in the shadows.

Rope's form stood silhouetted as the door swung open. He whistled, but got no answer.

"Damn that runt!" he rapped out. "Ain't he never comin' back?" He slammed the door. "I'm goin' t' scare the devil out o' him some o' these days."

"S-s-some o' these t-t-times," sibilated Wheeny to himself, "y-y-y'll go too f'r, an'—"

"Ain't y' 'fraid y'll go too f'r wit' him some o' these days?" echoed Cluck's voice, within, and Wheeny shrank down and shivered. "Y' can't tell what a half-wit o' that sort 'll do."

Rope laughed. "Y' can't go too f'r wit' a nut like him."

For a time there was quiet and Wheeny was about to open the door, when Rope laughed again—a bellowing guffaw.

"I got it! I'll scare him stiff. Listen. I said that soup looked somethin' like stale beer, didn't I, huh?"

"Sure."

"Well, listen. I'm goin' t' blow Wheeny up wit' some of it."

"Huh!"

"Aw—wit' some o' th' stale beer, I mean. Listen. Put half a pint or so of it in a old beer bottle, pull th' load out o' a 22-caliber shot ca'tridge, stick th' ca'tridge on th' end o' a piece o' fuse, hang th' fuse in th' bottle, fasten 'er there, down Wheeny an' tie him, light th' fuse, set it aside him, an'—he'll t'ink it's soup! Say—when that empty ca'tridge goes off! Wow!"

Wheeny's knees chattered at that, as well as his teeth, innocent as the trick would prove, now that he knew of it. He scuttled to the shadows just in time to keep from being seen by Rope, who once more came to the door to whistle down the alley.

"Nowhere in hearin', or he'd answer," pronounced Rope. "Say, when that goes off!" he chortled, "I— Boys, let's see him run. Hold him till th' fuse 's lit, an' then let him slip. How's that?"

A chorus of laughter greeted the proposal. Wheeny backed away.

"—Fix it up in th' mornin'—while he's gone—ready f'r him when he gets in in th' evenin'—" he heard Rope's voice fading as he went.

At the end of the alley a change came over him.

"'S funny, ain't it, huh?" he crackled. "Funny! I'll show y'—some o' these times. S-s-somehow. I can stand it 'f y' can."

With that he hurried down the alley, making as much noise as he could, pushed open the door, maneuvered for a clear way to set the four bottles on the table and retreated into a corner with his bucket.

"'Bout time y' was comin'!" Rope bit at him. "'Dja haf t' make 't?"

Wheeny gave no answer.

For the rest of the evening he did nothing except keep out of their way and nurse his foot in sullen silence.

"Leave 'bout half a pint o' those suds in that bucket," Rope warned him once, with a wink for the benefit of the others. "We want it tomorrow to scare—to scour somethin' wit'."

All of the next day Wheeny wandered about not far from one or the other, or all, of the trio. A little after sundown, having them all together, he slipped away.

Back in the dump he hunted with feverish haste through the untidy array of boxes and shelves along its walls. After a time he unearthed, from behind a dirty curtain, the thing for which he had been looking.

In the bottom of a small beer bottle was about half a pint of yellowish liquid. Down through the neck of the bottle, and held in place by a wedge of double paper, was about two feet of fuse, and on the inner end of this, within an inch or so of the liquor, was fixed a shining cylinder of metal.

Wheeny pulled out paper and fuse and examined the bit of metal. It had a slight rim at its closed end. He slipped it off with trembling fingers

and put in its stead another bit of metal, of nearly like shape, but rimless, which he took from his pocket.

"Scare me, will y'? Th-that'll be enough t' scare you," he chattered. He shook the bottle with an easy motion, and smelled into it. "Suds, a' right."

Half way across the room, to a darker corner, he burst out with a hysterical laugh. The sound frightened him, and he almost dropped the bottle. With bated breath he listened. Nothing stirred, however, and he continued into the corner, where he busied himself with clinking glass for a time, muttering to himself.

He had scarcely crossed the room and replaced fuse and paper, when voices sounded outside. With a jerky effort he pushed the bottle into its recess and sprang across the room and down beside the stove. Under an old blanket which he jerked over himself, he lay and shivered.

Rope struck a match as he came in and lighted the lamp.

"Soon 's he comes in we'll— Now, what t'ell?" He walked over and used his shoe on the twitching figure under the blanket. "Sick? Cold?"

Wheeny said nothing. He was just then incapable.

"Somethin' wrong wit' y', huh? Scared, mebbe? T'nk mebbe I finally caught up wit' y', don't y'? Well, mebbe I have. Say, boys—Gliotti lamped me this afternoon like he was gettin' onto somethin'—like somebody might a been droppin' him a hint or two 'bout those Black Hand letters he's been gettin'. Yesterday mornin' I seen somebody talkin' to him that looked like—y' don't reckon it was—"

He ended by searching out Wheeny's injured foot, and stepped on it heavily.

Wheeny jerked away and did his best to swallow a cry. The others came nearer, growling.

"It w-w-wasn't m-m-me y' s-s-seen." Wheeny's teeth were going like castanets. "Honest t' Gawd, Rope, it wasn't."

Rope drew the group over to one side. Their talk gradually grew louder and their voices more positive as they went on.

"'F y' was to ast me," declared Rope, "I'd say, let's not take no chances. I been suspectin' him, an' I been fixed for him for quite a while. Been lettin' him hang 'round here wit' us an' have a good time, an'—now look what he's went an' done! Huh? No, sir! We'll send th' whole dump up wit' him. Bring th' bottle y'll find behind that curtain. Careful wit' it, Bill. Soup's mighty touchous."

With a single leap, he cleared the room and twitched the blanket away. He brought Wheeny's hands together at the back, whipped out a bandanna, and lashed the wrists together. Wheeny fought, in a way, but the resistance ran out of him at sight of the bottle which Bill brought to their side.

"Rope," he screeched, "you ain't honest goin' t' tie me an'—"

Rope clapped a hard hand over his mouth.

"No beefin'," he bit in; "we don't want any bulls 'round here—yet. Y' got it comin' t' y'. Here,—gimme somethin' t' gag him wit'."

"O-o-h —my—Gawd — amighty!" drivelled Wheeny, between the heavy

fingers; "don't! Th-that much soup'll t-t-tear h-h-half th' block down! Don't tie me! Help!"

"None o' that! There,—y' won't yell through that."

Rope stepped over to where Bill held the bottle.

"I cut th' fuse two foot long. That'll give us a minute t' make our getaway in. That'll be a-plenty, huh? Everybody ready?"

Behind their turned backs, Wheeny pulled his untied feet under him and slipped the loose bandanna from his wrists.

"Light her up, an' let's get out," ordered Rope, a chuckle in his tones. "Now watch!"

When the first sputtering of the lighted fuse struck his ear, Wheeny drew himself together and on his feet. In a flash, he catapulted toward the door with a wild and desperate yell, his injured foot forgotten. The group made a dash for him, but he won outside.

"Hell!" bawled Rope, "we forgot t' tie his feet! Get out, fellers!"

Wheeny tore down the alley as though Death were at his heels. As he shot out of the mouth of it and across the street into another, a mighty, roaring chorus of laughter came after him. A single backward glance showed him a dark, swaying group in the door of the dump, and in the center of it a sinister, moving spot of fire,—the burning fuse. His shaking frame almost went to pieces at the sight, but he caught himself and put on an extra burst of speed.

He almost reached the second street when a terrific explosion tore open the night. Wheeny pitched forward and lay quivering, as if the detonation had hurled him there.

"Sc-scared me, didja?" he mewled into the crook of his elbow. "Y-y-y' won't no more—s'help me! S-s-soup looks a whole lot like stale s-s-suds, but it d-d-don't act like it, does it, Rope? Scared me, d-d-didja!"

With tears of weak anger running down his foolish face, and mouthing stale, useless threats, he sat up slowly and nursed his injured foot.

In Ashes Burn Their Wonted Fires

BY EDITH MINITER

WFUL glad there's a moon," Clymenia Clemons said to herself, as she panted up the path to the house door. "I don't fancy those woods when it's pitch dark."

The way was shadowed by shrubs, but her feet did not stray.

"It seems as if the grass were getting long," she thought, and bent over to make sure. Yes, it was wet with dew. She was close to the step now, and shook her dampened skirts. As her foot struck the boards a small animal scuttled from behind the vine-shaded post and vanished.

She peered into the half light. "Was that a kitten," she wondered, "or just one of the old cats? They ought not to be afraid of me. When I bring their food out I can't step without they are all under foot."

The porch looked very white and clean in the moonlight. Even the posts that supported the roof, made from slender tree trunks with the stumps of boughs left protruding, looked colorless, though Clymenia was well aware they were dark brown.

"The moonlight's great on altering things," she mused, as she went into the house. It was so warm a night she did not feel surprised to find the door open. In the kitchen the cool night air met with a variety of odors, which she instantly distributed within her mind, ascribing the damp to the cellar, the soot to the uncleaned chimney, the acrid smell to the vinegar barrel that was ever dripping in a back room and a tale of grease to "mother's frying a few doughnuts after supper." She even thought of seeking a few in the pantry, but desisted.

"Pa and ma are in the little bedroom," she murmured. "I can't risk waking them. They would want to know what kept me up so late. They always want to know. I'll hurry up to bed without lighting a candle."

A sleepy chirp startled her, and then she laughed softly. It was mother's canary, to be sure, over in the corner, hung so high the cats could not get at it, and sound asleep with mother's apron over the cage.

She lifted the latch and cautiously crept upstairs, her eyes staring into the utter blackness. Her heart beat with such violence that it seemed as if the little house must shake, and when she neared a stair which memory told her always creaked she stepped right over it, and was soon safe on the top landing.

There were two doors before her. For a moment she had an idea of entering the large room over the kitchen. The best room it was, and in it, with no better light than that of the moon, Clymenia loved to see her slender figure reflected in the one long mirror of the house, to advance and retreat coquettishly, to smirk, to look stern for a moment, and then to break into dimple-decked smiles; in brief, to

rehearse the little comedy she had played during the evening, afar down the road, for the benefit of her lover, Dick Morehead. It was a fascinating play, but dangerous if her stern parents found it out. After a moment's temptation Clymenia decided to have none of it this night.

"Yes, of course," she whispered, "I remember what Dick says, not to mind father and mother; that scoldings can't hurt and I'm too big to whip or shut up, but I feel frightened just the same. It's—it's weird tonight, too, more than usual."

Finding her own door ajar she hurried down the two steps leading to it, knocking her head against the ceiling.

"Well, well," she scolded herself, "seems as if I never can gauge that old ceiling right. I never seem to remember I'm grown up; I bump my forehead every time I come here in the dark."

The roof encroached upon the tiny room, beginning at a point right above the door, and sloping at an acute angle until within a foot of the floor. A narrow bed cuddled under the eaves. At one end, where the wall was highest, stood a chest of drawers, atop of which was a looking-glass, with the quicksilver wearing off, so that it reflected only in spots.

At the other end, Clymenia could dimly see the bulk of the tall wardrobe that held her slender stock of frocks. The bed was in disorder—its coverlids dragging on the floor, but Clymenia had little disposition to do more than throw herself upon it, fully dressed. She had much to think about, and had indeed slept but little in the wonderful summer nights since Dick Morehead had come to help in the haying at Whittier's down below, and Clymenia had stolen out each evening to meet him by the flat bridge in the meadow. Each evening, too, she had lingered longer, their parting had been more reluctant, and her heart had beaten more tumultuously after memory began to busy itself as now, among scenes that seemed continually repassing.

"Oh, Dick," she whispered, into the warm, soft hand that she had placed on either cheek, in imitation of the way Dick himself had held her face not long ago, "what's to come of it all? By and by the hay will be made, and you will have to go away. You say to kiss and be happy while we can, but I can't feel that way, only when I am right with you. You have nothing, Dick, for us to live on if we should run away, and besides, it will be four more years before you finish your studies and can be set apart to preach and have a home. And then father will not be any more willing I should marry you than he is now. The Clemons always hated the Moreheads, and so he thinks they always should."

It was a tangle, with no clue as yet; and so, as ever, Clymenia put aside her grief and turned to happier thoughts—to visions of Dick as he had looked in the moonlight, ruddy faced with gleaming eyes, or as when he went his separate way down the road after they had parted. She had watched until he was almost out of sight, and then had turned away her eyes so as to avoid seeing him quite disappear, because of the old superstition that if she did so he might never return.

"And after all," she thought, "I was

in such a hurry that I looked up too quick, and there he was, turning the corner. And wasn't I a silly girl, to want to call him back? I did run down the road a ways almost shouting, but he did not hear, and tomorrow I'll see him again, just the same!"

So, smiling in fond fancy of that same tomorrow, even as she shivered with trifling apprehensions, she dropped into sleep. Once she partly awoke, disturbed by a sound, and asked sharply, "What's that?" Then, in silent mirth, she replied, "Clymenia, you great goose! It's only your father's watch, ticking away in the spare room. The door must be ajar, after all, or I could not hear it so plainly."

Hours went by; the moon sank; and the red ball called the summer's sun arose. It was very quiet hereabout, yet the wakening of plant and bird life makes confusion that causes the light sleeper to stir. Clymenia opened her eyes, lay quiet a few moments, and sat up exclaiming, "Gracious, I must hurry. I want to iron that pink muslin so I can wear it tonight, and finish the oakleaf edging for my petticoat, besides."

A moment more, and the little old house rang with her shrieks. The room in which Clymenia found herself bore, in shape and size, semblance to the one she believed herself to have entered the night before, but otherwise it was not the same. In vain she looked for the rosebud paper she had hung on the walls with her own hands; for the frilled curtains she had starched and strung over the long window. A wisp of dirty rag hid one broken pane. The walls were crumbling. The wardrobe door yawned, showing vacancy save for the pile of neatly drilled nuts that proved this to have been the place of a squirrel's winter hoard. The bed was indeed disordered, for the rotten bedstead was covered by a squalid straw mattress, over which dragged a torn coverlid, mildewed with rain from the leaking roof.

Clymenia dashed into the tiny hall and flung open the spare room door. No furniture remained; the floor was sunken, and a great hole in the wall let in the branch of a tree. Downstairs she almost fell, and saw, with growing horror, that the stair which always creaked, and over which she had so carefully stepped in the night, was a yawning cavity.

As for the kitchen, it was plain why she had felt the night air, for there was no door to close, and every pane in the window was shattered. A pair of birds had built their nest on a tiny shelf high up in one corner. Above its edge tiny heads appeared, with great beaks gaping for food. Mother's canary was gone; why its successors had befooled Clymenia in the moonlight might be plainly understood. There was nothing else in the room excepting a horrible heap of rubbish in the fireplace. Like a whirlwind, Clymenia went through the house. In the little bedroom where she had imagined her parents calmly sleeping, the floor had gone through to the cellar, and the plaster sagged inward until the walls nearly met. The pantry was crumbled to a mass of debris; she could see the surface of the well that formerly fed the pump. It was covered with a blue scum, mixed with rotting leaves.

On the porch, in the morning sunlight, Clymenia stood in ever growing fright. Last night, in the moonlight, had she not been young, of pulsating heart, creeping to her bed after an evening of happiness with Richard, fearful only of waking her parents? Today she woke and found the house a ruin, the path choked with weeds, wild squirrels chattering about, instead of the domesticated tabby cats that she had imagined beside the door. Was this a dream, or had she been dreaming in the moonlight? She pinched herself and felt it plainly; she touched the wood and it was rough; she knew that she was awake.

Clymenia retraced her steps into the little room. The looking-glass still hung above the dilapidated chest of drawers. Focussing her face until it was opposite a bit that still seemed to possess the power of reflection, Clymenia rubbed it round and round with her elbow, removing the dust and smear of years, and then looked long and anxiously.

In place of clear blue eyes, flaxen curls, pink and plump cheeks, she gazed at a section of brown skin marked by intersecting wrinkles. There was visible a single straying lock of white hair, with never a hint of curl.

It wasn't just the house, then; she too, was an old wreck. How it had come to be she could not understand; she would go out into the road and think.

Once in the road instinct led her away from the ruined house, without a backward glance. People looked from their windows and said, "There goes Clymenia Clemons; it's a wonder the almshouse keeper lets her wander about alone." And one or two old dames, with groping memory, tried to recall her history, but spoke only vaguely of a time when her father had given it out that his daughter was insane. One Richard Morehead, a young student who had afterward become a famous man, had raged at Clymenia's father, but had never been allowed to see the afflicted girl. For more years than could be counted, she had been a prisoner in her father's home, fed through a barred window that was closely shuttered whenever callers came to the Clemon's house. And then the old folks had died, and Clymenia became a town charge; the authorities making use of the Clemon's land for payment, but letting the house fall into ruin, as it was on a byroad and no one cared to live in it. Clymenia, it was known, was gentle and easy to care for; her only sign of dementia being a total lack of understanding that she was anything but the girl of eighteen who had been thrust into that bedroom cell by her father long years before.

While sturdily walking in the growing heat of the morning, Clymenia increased in bravery, and she was able to span the long years and hitch the present to the far-distant past.

Ere long the way she absently followed led into one of those valleys that nestle amid mountains, where a creek flows over moss-grown stones between banks shaded by flags and lush grass, while untrimmed trees keep out the sunshine. There is a chill in such places, even on a summer morning. Clymenia shivered; and while she stood, trembling pitifully, there

came another memory of the night.

"Father's watch," she whispered, with parched lips. "I surely heard it. I woke and listened for a long while. I counted up to seventy before I fell asleep. And yet it was never a watch."

She recalled superstitions about the "death watches" that ticked in walls as "warnings." Yes, that was it.

"And I seem," she said, calmly stretching out her hand, "to be along toward seventy. It was for me. Well, perhaps 'tis as well."

Shuddering, she sank into the muddy road, and lay there. She had fallen so that her slender body fitted into a deep rut, and it was almost as if she were already in a damp grave. Lying with the ear close to the earth, one quickly becomes conscious of any unusual vibration, and such presently stirred Clymenia. As she sat up and mechanically brushed the mud from her arms, a second wave passed by, and then a third.

The foliage of the trees grew so low that had Clymenia been standing she could have seen nothing, but as it was, she got a glimpse between the sedges of the adjacent meadow, back to where the old house had dominated the landscape for almost a century.

It would do so no more, for the sounds marked a last protest against descending from the standard of a home to a simple mass of rubbish.

Clymenia spoke aloud. "It's fallen into the cellar hole," she exclaimed with awe. "The chimney went first, and then the walls crumbled like cardboard."

She looked at the muddy crevice of earth, in which she had lain, and was fain to settle back forever. She spoke, for the one time in her life, with anger. "Oh, why," she moaned, "did that not come last night, when I was there, all unsuspecting?"

Then a twig moved in a passing breeze; one ray of warm sunlight fell on her forehead and roused her love of life. At the same moment two men came up, stopped and stared. Said one, "She has been so placid we gave her perfect liberty. She has been busy sewing and tending the sick. We never suspected she would run away. Now, Mr. Morehead, I do not think we can assume the responsibility of her any longer. Besides, the amount of her property is about used up."

The spirited man, with whitened locks belied by a firm mouth and a pair of flashing eyes, looked at Clymenia, and saw that she was his at her first waking moment, just as she had been at the instant when her father's cruelty condemned her to a life of death. He had just passed the fallen house; had learned from a neighbor that Clymenia was seen coming from it but half an hour ere it fell.

He removed his hat and lifted his face to the heavens. "Thank God," he said, in simple gratitude, "that in His divine mercy that came today, and not when she was there, all unsuspecting."

Then, holding out his hand, "Come, Clymenia," he said, "we still have Indian Summer before us, and it's often the best of all the year."

Dora of Three Dot

BY FRED TURNER RANNEY

TIP HARRIS holds four aces and a king; old man Scott holds four kings and an ace, and shortly thereafter Hank Smithey, the coroner, holds an inquest. That night Tip sleeps his last long sleep on a marble slab in Smithey's undertakin' shop and Scott sleeps on his saddle somewhere in the Beartooth mountains. Whereupon, Three Dot, most fickle of burgs, seeks new excitement.

Jim Herford always did claim as how the only excuse there was for old man Scott's obscurin' the landscape was his daughter, and Three Dot was plumb unanimous that Dora was excuse 'nough for her dad. Dora run the postoffice and was that scan'lous pretty that when you went in to buy one li'l old stamp you always bought ten at least. And them big blue eyes of hern was the despair of every cowpuncher from the Big Horn to the Musselshell.

But it was easy seen that the boys in the Angora chaps stood no chance 'longside Bob Hackley, the county attorney; and not a bit of cayuse was there in his makeup. We was all gettin' primed for the real hifalutin' hitchin' up, square dances and lots of noise—but you know what the poet fellow says about the cup slippin' from the lip.

Mor'n likely things woulda been finer'n frog fuzz at that if Sandy Hawkins, the sheriff, hadn't slopped over. He was ridin' out Painted Robe way huntin' horses, night comin' on and him and his pony both petered out, when he sees a little camp-fire in a coulee. Down he rides and squats 'longside waitin' for the boss to show. And pretty soon the boss shows up heap plenty, for who comes bustin' through the brush, bringin' a pannier of water, but old man Scott hisself.

Sandy protests to this day as how he give Scott every chance to make a get-away, tellin' him his horse was lame, couldn't run a lick on earth, and as how he was that nigh tuckered out that if a man did escape he couldn't track him in a foot of snow. But Scott's lonesome for his little gal and says as how he's sick of livin' in the hills like a slinkin' coyote, and figures he'll come in and take hisn.

The minute Sandy brings Scott in and locks him up, Dora is down at the jail with her dad, cryin' on his neck. Then somebody asks what'll Bob Hackley do now, prosecute his gal's dad for murder? But we know'd what he'd do; we know'd he'd come through, because there weren't nothin' of the quitter in Bob. Just the same we was mighty sorry for the kid and speculates to ourselves what we'd do in his boots.

So the old man comes up for trial pretty soon and Three Dot was host to everybody for fifty miles round. Bill Martin's defendin' Scott, but Bill never was no account only to second

motions and call square dances, so we all know'd there wasn't goin' to be no easy sleddin' for the old man.

Court opens with old Judge Brown on the bench, settin' up there lookin' wiser'n a tree full of owls, and they brings in old Scott, and Dora is with him. They take seats at the lawyers' table, facin' Bob. After a bit, Bob looks over Dora's way, kinda hopeful-like, but she turns her back and gives him 'bout the coldest shoulder I ever see. We was sorry for 'em both.

Two long, hot days, courtroom packed and stuffy, and it was nip and tuck 'tween the rope and old Scott, him tellin' as how it was self-defense and Tip fired first and all that, but it don't seem to stick worth a cent. Hackley's ridin' him all the time, borin' in like sin, askin' the hardest questions you ever see, and old Bill Martin's settin' there in a trance, just takin' up room, doin' nothin'.

Ike Virtue testifies he hears one shot, and only one; Doc Peters shows the bullet he took out of Harris. It's a forty-four; Scott always toted a forty-four. Hackley proves as how Tip's gun, a thirty-eight, is found right 'longside where he fell, with the hammer down on an empty shell for safety, but as how there's five good shells in the gun. Certainly looked like old Scott was nigh the finish of his mortal career.

The third day everything's in but the spoutin'. When court opens Hackley asks that the jury be taken to the place of the killin' so they can savy the layout better, and the old judge seein' it that way, sends the bunch down with the sheriff to look over the spread.

Don't know what happened down there, but in about fifteen minutes back comes the whole pack on the high lope. "Silvertip" Morse, bein' the oldest, stands right up and tells the judge as how they found another bullet in the wall of the shack, a thirty-eight, and as how Tip had a thirty-eight on him when he cashed in.

You could heard a pin drop. Course the judge tells old "Silvertip" as how he'd over-talked hisself considerable, but he don't act much peeved at that. No time at all until the case was in, Hackley seemin' to lose his grip all of a sudden. The jury files out and was soon back again and Scott is free.

Then the crowd surges out like sheep through a chute, takin' old Scott and the judge and the jury down to the Holdup Bar. But I stays back in a corner mighty quiet, for Dora is over by the jurybox cryin' and Hackley's fiddlin' with the papers on his table, and somethin's liable to happen.

Pretty soon Bob looks up and makes out he's just seen Dora, and he know'd all the time she was there. He walks over to her slow and hesitatin'-like and puts out his hand.

"Good-bye, Miss Scott; I'm leavin' here tonight," he says in a kinda choky voice. "If you ever need a friend you may depend on me."

Dora didn't say nothin' at first or offer to shake hands. She just dabs at her eyes with her handkerchief and looks up at him kinda wistful-like.

"I followed you down to Tip Harris's shack last night and saw you fire that bullet into the wall," Dora says in a little bit. Hackley turns pale and slinks down like somethin' had hit

him on the head. He tries to say somethin' but his mouth just works like he was talkin' and he wasn't makin' a sound.

"I know why you did it," Dora went on. "When you go away I shall go with you, if you want me to, and there won't ever be any good-bye for us."

And they never heard me as I tiptoes out, and my boots squeaked somethin' fierce at that.

The Funeral at Paradise Bar

BY PAUL SHOUP

ABOUT four o'clock in the morning, Uncle Hank Witherspoon would climb up on the box while the sun was tossing a few experimental shafts of light across the canyon, and, watching with pride and satisfaction the leaders dancing little dust clouds out of the stage road, would remark to bystanders who turned up their coat collars and talked politics to keep warm:

"Some men are born hostlers; you sees it by the way they lifts a hoss's foot; some *sabes* how to ride, and most gin'r'lly they overruns their boots 'n their spurs is bright; and then there be others that are fine at hoofin' it and lambastin' a pack train with a rawhide an' one hundred choice selections from two langidges; but as for me, my special speci-ality is just plain drivin' of a stage; a stage with four hosses; just that and nothin' more."

With that, Uncle Hank would loosen his whip, the leaders would rear like chargers on a monument, the wheel horses would gather their feet under them—and down the road, pitching, swaying, leaving behind them a wall of dust, would go the famous Mokelumne stage.

Uncle Hank was at the helm of the transportation system of Paradise Bar; he and his stage the connecting link between camp and civilization, the latter represented by the county seat, Meadow Lark. Uncle Hank, recognizing his importance in both communities, and especially in Paradise Bar, was as gracious as an only hope—he was never forlorn—to which a community clung would naturally be expected to be. He was an absolute dictator, it is true; he even decided the locations of the passengers on the stage, and settled disputes as to outside and inside. But he was autocratic wisely, and there was really no reason why he should have been called upon to divide his sovereignty.

Yet, one sad day the Aladdin Bonanza Company built a lumber road down from Paradise Bar to Lone Pine. At Lone Pine the new road connected with the line of the Gray Eagle Stage Company, which, as Uncle Hank put it, flopped its way up from Meadow Lark. So, when the Gray Eagle extended its tri-weekly service from Lone Pine to Paradise Bar, trouble outcropped on Uncle Hank's trail at once.

George William Pike, of the Upper Basin, was the driver to whom Uncle Hank referred as the drygoods clerk who handled the ribbons for the opposition corporation. George William surmised here and there and elsewhere, when he cornered an audience, that the new route was two miles the shorter, and the grade, calculating ups and downs, at least five per cent better. The report reached Uncle Hank by air line, of course. He was silent a little while, and then with elaborate

courtesy thanked his informant, adding that he was greatly obliged, not for the news itself, but because he had for a long time been trying to recollect the name of the chap who left Placerville after trying circumstances without advising his bondsmen. There was some difference of opinion in Paradise Bar concerning the merits of the two lines; so long as they ran on different days and at different hours, the question could not be satisfactorily settled, and the Bright Light kept open an hour later in the evening to permit a full discussion of the subject—thereby saving shutting up at all.

The real trouble began when the Gray Eagle line, perceiving that Uncle Hank continued to carry the larger part of the business, borrowed his schedule and started to operate upon it with their new yellow coach with vermilion trimmings and four white horses, to say nothing of George William Pike with his curled mustache, red necktie and stand-up collar. He would have worn a silk hat too—the owners of the line were aristocrats, with ideas and winter residences in Lunnon—but Morosin' Jones who squirmed his shoulders and clasped his hands like an awkward maid of fifteen when he talked, begged him to desist, he, Morosin,' had such an unconquerable inclination to perforate high hats with his forty-four wherever they might be, George William wisely desisted.

Uncle Hank's stage had nothing but a faint recollection of paint, and was written over with history recorded by bullet holes; the harness was apt to be patched, and Nebuchadnezzar, the off leader, was wall-eyed, and his partner, Moloch, sway-backed and short-maned. Of the wheel horses, one was a gray with hoofs that needed constant paring; the other had the appearance of a white-washed house at which mud had been flung with startling effect. Of the two, Rome and Athens, no god could have decided which was entitled to the palm of ugliness; but Uncle Hank, who loved them all, declared that the wheel-horses were beauty spots in nature alongside the leaders.

It was a memorable morning on which the two stages left Paradise Bar together. The yellow stage, with its nickle-plated harness and white horses and tan-gloved driver, started three minutes first; and then, as if gathering up his horses and the stage and the reins altogether, Uncle Hank went down the line. It was a lively experience for the passengers; bends they went around on two wheels, creeks they took at a leap, boulders and ruts only they avoided, and that because a scientist was using his science. The grade of the other line must have been at that time very good, for Uncle Hank had been only four minutes hitched in front of the Elysium Hotel when the other stage drew up. It was true that he picked his teeth as if he had been in to lunch, and casually enquired of a passenger, so that George William might hear, if they had stopped for dinner on the road, or did they expect to get it at the hotel; whereat the passenger, jolted and jarred beyond good manners, roared:

"Stop for dinner! Great Scott! We stopped for nothing—boulders, rivers, landslides or precipices; if his Satanic Majesty was after us, he found the worst trail he ever travelled—and I

can't imagine what other reason there could be for such driving."

The passenger went into the hotel. George William said something below his breath and Uncle Hank smiled.

Alas for vanity! Ever it goes before a stumble, a broken spring or a sick horse. The stages had different schedules for the upward trip, but on the next journey downward disaster overtook Uncle Hank. Seven of the nine hours' ride were accomplished, and the stage was at the mouth of the canyon. Here a point of rock thrusts itself forward, marking a sharp turn in the road. Around this turn galloped the horses, and twenty feet before him, sunning itself in the road, Moloch saw an eleven-button rattler. He knew what that meant, and sat down and slid with all four feet plowing the mountain road. They stopped short of the snake, that had coiled and awaited their coming and then, perceiving the enemy otherwise engaged, had wisely slipped into the manzanitas by the roadside. Fifteen precious minutes were used in repairing the harness—and the race was lost.

That night, for the first time in the ten years in which he had been the oracle of two communities, Uncle Hank, instead of telling stories and expounding wisdom for the benefit of the unenlightened below, went up to his room immediately after dinner and retired without lighting his candle. George William put on a new pink necktie and his beloved silk hat, and went about, stepping high like one of his white horses, but casting wary glances abroad for the appearance of one Morosin' Jones, who was coy and fidgety and could perforate a dollar at a distance of one hundred feet.

In Paradise Bar every game was settled by the best two out of three. Life was too feverish and too short to await three out of five, and it was against the principles of the camp to leave any question undecided. Therefore, it was tacitly understood that the winner of the next race would be the standard of comparison thereafter in matters pertaining to travel. Other stage lines would be second class, ranking just above a mule train. There was another reason: Paradise Bar was exceedingly fond of excitement, but it had no mind to risk its neck in stage racing down the mountain side forever and ever; precipices yawned too many invitations. The personal feeling and the betting both heavily favored Uncle Hank, both gratifying and troubling to him.

There is little doubt that in the third race, under fair conditions, Uncle Hank would have won; he would either have won or gone over a precipice. But Rome, who had never before been known to have anything the matter with him save an abnormal appetite for grain, fell slightly lame. All day before the race Uncle Hank worried over this, all night he tossed in his blankets, and was only partly relieved the next day when Rome appeared again to be all right, and ate hay as if under the impression that the sun was shining and there was plenty more being made. The last two days had greatly changed Uncle Hank; he carried his head so that his beard touched his breast; his hat was slouched low over his eyes; he kept his hands in his pockets and spoke in monosyllables.

The next morning, with the fear of that lameness in his heart, Uncle Hank hitched up and drove down the main street. He saw the yellow stage, also ready. There was no evidence of lameness in Rome as he drove up to the door of the express office, nor when the stage stopped at the Record Nugget for the hotel passengers. Uncle Hank's despondent face became more cheerful; he looked older and grayer and even bent a little that morning, but he climbed up on the box with his old-time energy. His courage and spirit were never to be doubted; only that lameness in Rome worried him. He gathered up the lines and loosened his whip; but the four did not go with their accustomed dashing display. Instead there was confusion and hesitation; in fifteen yards the slight lameness of the right wheel horse was apparent, and Uncle Hank drew up. He dropped the lines and for a moment his face was in his hands. The other stage had gone. Nothing could ever convince the public satisfactorily, he thought, that after starting he had not given up the race through fear. The limp was scarcely apparent. He perhaps would not have noticed it for some miles had it not been for his haunting dread and the false start. Yet he knew what it would mean before the level was reached—a steep down grade—and he would have to go walking into Meadow Lark, a loser by an hour.

Uncle Hank, a broken old man, climbed down from the stage.

"Take 'em, George," he said to the hostler. "There won't be no stage down today."

He said no more, but passed amid a dead silence along the road through the population of Paradise Bar which had turned out to see the beginning of the deciding race. Some guessed at the reason; and to all it became apparent when the horses were taken back to the stable and examined.

That day Uncle Hank did not appear, nor the next; so Bob Allen went up to his cabin in the evening and, receiving no response to his knocking, kicked open the door and went in. Uncle Hank lay in his bunk, his face to the wall. To Bob's expressions of sympathy and encouraging remarks, he made no reply; they were to him as the expressions engraved on tombstones, and but added bitterness now. To his arguments, Uncle Hank vouchsafed single words in return, and never turned his face from the wall. Bob knew the case was desperate and retired, defeated.

The friends of Uncle Hank, the entire population of Paradise Bar, gravely discussed the situation. It was unanimously decided that the yellow stage should thereafter stop outside of the camp limits, and Morosin' Jones publicly announced, his shoulders working up and down most nervously, that George William would immediately cease from wearing stand-up collars and red neckties; he would come into camp with a slouch hat, a flannel shirt and teamster's warranted-to-wear gloves—or it was quite likely he would never go out again. This statement met with the silent approval of the entire assemblage; and George William, hearing of it, puzzled and bewildered, wisely refrained from coming into the camp limits at all, but remained by the stage.

The next morning a committee waited on Uncle Hank, prepared with arguments that would show him the error of broken-heartedness—the easiest thing in the world to cure if its victims would but live to tell us of it. Uncle Hank still lay with his face to the wall, and in a little while the news was abroad in the camp that Uncle Hank, still with his face to the wall, had resolutely died.

It was determined, as a last mark of the camp's esteem for Uncle Hank, to make the journey to the place of the final tie-up simple but impressive. No formal meeting was held; the boys just gathered together and acted on a common idea. The whole camp would be in the procession, and they would go down to Meadow Lark over the old familiar road. Uncle Hank's stage, carrying the old stage driver, would be at the head, of course; then there was an awkward pause. More than one felt that it would add to the dignity of the occasion to have two stages, but finally, when Major Wilkerson arose and suggested that the Gray Eagle stage, carrying leading citizens, be placed next, there was a murmur of dissent. Then Bob Allen arose in his place and made the only known speech of his life:

"Friends, you are on the wrong trail and will hit a blind canyon, certain. Of course we should have the other stage and Pike to drive it. Uncle Hank wasn't the kind of a man to carry jealousy with him into camp. 'Twasn't bein' beat by Pike that broke Uncle Hank's heart; it was partly p'raps bein' beat at all, and partly, to my way of thinkin', because Paradise Bar didn't stand behind him. That was the main reason, gentlemen; he jest died of pure lonesomeness. When this yaller ve-hicle comes into camp, does we say to it: 'You're purty and you're new, and probably your springs is all right and maybe your road; but you might jest as well pass on? Do you observe this old stage with its paint wore off and its bullet holes? Do you see that it's down a little on one side and some of the spokes is new and some is old? Do you know that these four old hosses have been whoopin' her up for Paradise Bar and for nothin' else these ten years—and a sunshiny day and one chuck full of snow and sleet was all the same to them? Be you aware that this is our Uncle Hank, and that he has been workin' our lead for us these fifteen years, and never lost a dollar or a pound of stuff or spilled a passenger, or asked one of the boys to hoof it because he hadn't no *dinero?* Those bullet holes—men behind masks made 'em, but Uncle Hank never tightened a ribbon for the whole caboodle. The paint's been knocked off that stage in our service, and it's ours. Therefore, though you be yaller and handsome, with consid'ble silver plate, we can't back you against our own flesh 'n blood. And that settles it.'

"Did we talk that way, boys? No, we jest stood off and gambled on the result as if Uncle Hank was a travellin' stranger 'stead of the best friend we had. We stood off impartial like and invited the white hoss outfit to git in and win if it could. And now, gentlemen, have we got the nerve to dynamite this opposition stage line, when the whole gang of us ought to be blown sky high?

"Uncle Hank wouldn't have had it so. He didn't cherish any ill feeling pussonally against anybody; whatever he said was because they was takin' away from him what he had worked all his life for. He wasn't jealous of George William, but of him as a stage driver, because we made him so. Boys, he loved us and was mighty proud of our regard—and we didn't show it in the time of trial. And he's gone over the great divide with tears in his eyes, and we are to blame. Who among any of us poor fools has a right to say that the other stage shouldn't follow?"

Bob sat down amid absolute silence, wiping his face vigorously. Major Wilkerson rose to his feet.

"I renew my suggestion," said he, "that we have the Gray Eagle stage. I think you'll all agree with Bob."

Morosin' Jones rose from his stump, suffused with emotion.

"In course he's right," he said, huskily. "But the stage oughter be painted black."

A murmur of assent greeted this speech.

The day was beautiful. The procession went slowly down the old stage road, past Lime Point, through the Roaring River canyon, beyond up Reddy's grade, over the First Summit and then through Little Forest to the watering place at the head of the last canyon. Every stream, every tree, every rock along the road was known to Uncle Hank. He was going home over a familiar way. The pine trees, with their somber green, were silent; the little streams that went frolicking from one side of a canyon to another seemed subdued.

All would have gone well had not George William Pike been a man without understanding—and such a man is beyond redemption. He did not appreciate the spirit of the invitation to join in this last simple ceremony in honor of Uncle Hank. He accepted it as an apology from Paradise Bar and growled to himself because of the absurd request to paint the coach black—which he would not have done except for an order from the superintendent, who was a man of policy. A year could have been wasted in explaining that the invitation was an expression of humility and of atonement for the camp's treatment of its own. So he came and wore his silk hat and red necktie; Morosin' Jones almost had a spasm in restraining himself.

Down the mountain side they went, slowly and decorously. Nothing eventful happened until the mouth of the canyon was cleared, and then George William became impatient. He could not understand the spirit of the occasion. Meadow Lark and supper were a long way off, and the luncheon at the Half-Way House had been light. So he began making remarks over his horses' heads with the intention of hurrying up Gregg, who was driving the old stage.

"Well fitted for this kind of work, those horses, ain't they?" he said. "Seems curious they were ever put on the stage."

Gregg said nothing, but tightened rein a bit.

"Where will we stop for the night?" asked George William presently, flicking the off leader's ear with his whip.

Gregg turned around angrily.

"If you don't like the way this thing is bein' done, you can cut and go on

in town alone; but if you don't keep your mouth closed there'll be trouble."

"I don't want to go into town alone," rejoined George William pleasantly, "but I reckon we'd go in better fashion if we was at the head of this percession."

"Maybe you'd better try it," said Gregg, reddening, and thereupon George William turned out his four white horses and his black stage, without saying anything to his two passengers, and proceeded to go around.

Gregg gathered in the slack in his reins. "Go back!" he roared. But Pike, swinging wide to the right to avoid the far-reaching whip, went on. Nebuchadnezzar picked up his ears. Rome looked enquiringly at Athens, and Moloch snorted indignantly. Athens's expression said very plainly: "Are we at our time of life going to permit four drawing-room apologies for horses and a new-fangled rattletrap to pass us on our own road?" The negative response could be seen in the quiver that ran down each horse's back. The leaders gently secured their bits between their teeth.

So absorbed was Gregg in the strange action of George William that he paid little attention to his own horses. Up and down the line behind him men were waving and gesticulating and shouting.

"Don't let him pass you!" yelled Wilkerson. That instruction ran up and down the line, clothed in a variety of picturesque and forcible utterances. But no instruction was needed by the horses in front of Gregg.

They understood, and scarcely had the other stage turned into the main road ahead when they at one jump broke from a walk to a gallop. George William saw and gave his four the rein and the whip. Glancing back, Gregg watched the whole procession change from a line of decorous dignity to one of active excitement. Dust began to rise, men on horseback passed men on mules; men in buckboards passed men on lumber wagons.

George William held the road, and with it a great advantage. To pass him it would be necessary to go out among the rocks and the sage brush, and the white four were racing swiftly, rolling out behind them a blinding cloud of dust. Gregg set his teeth, and spoke encouragingly to his horses.

George William turned and shouted back an insult:

"You needn't hurry; we'll tell them you'll be there to-morrow. 'Tend to your new business; there is nothing in the other for you. We're going into town first."

"Maybe," said Gregg grimly—and loosened his whip.

The four lifted themselves together at its crack; in another half mile they were ready to turn out to go around. Gregg watched for a place anxiously. Brush and boulders seemed everywhere, but finally he choose a little sandy wash along which ran the road for a way. Turning out, he went into the sand and lost ten yards. He heard George William laugh sarcastically. But the old stage horses had been in sand before, and had but one passenger besides their driver. In a little while they were abreast the leaders, and here they stayed and could gain no farther. For George William laid on the lash, and the road was good. On

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they went, the one stage running smoothly on the hard road, the other swaying, bounding, rocking among the rocks and the gullies. A little while they ran thus, and then the road began to tell. Pike shouted triumphantly. Gregg, with despair in his heart, watched with grief the loss of inch after inch.

"What can I do?" he groaned—and turning, he found himself face to face with Uncle Hank. The reins dropped from his nerveless hands, and his face went white.

"Give me a hand," shouted Uncle Hank, and over the swinging door he crawled on the seat—and Gregg perceived he was flesh and blood. The old fire was in his eyes, he stood erect and loosened his whip with his left hand easily as of yore. And then something else happened. The line behind was scattered and strung out to perhaps a mile in length, but every eye was on the racing coaches. They saw the familiar figure of the old stage driver, saw him gather up the reins; saw, and understood that he had come back to life again, and up and down that line went a cheer such as Paradise Bar will seldom hear again.

Uncle Hank sent the whip waving over the backs of his beloved. "Nebuchadnezzar! Moloch! Rome! Athens! Come! No loafing now. This is our road, our stage—and our camp is shouting. Don't you hear the boys! Ten years together, you 'n me. Whose dust have we taken? Answer me! Good, Athens, good—steady, Rome, you blessed whirlwind. Reach out, Neb—that's it—reach. Easy, Moloch, easy; never mind the rocks. Yo-ho! Yo-ho-o-o! In we go!"

At the first words of the master, the four lifted themselves as if inspired. Then they stretched lowly and ran; ran because they knew as only horses can know; ran as his voice ran, strong and straight. In three minutes they turned in ahead of the white horses and the funeral stage. The race was practically won.

Uncle Hank, with the hilarious Gregg alongside, drove into Meadow Lark ten minutes ahead of all others—and Meadow Lark in its astonishment almost stampeded. After a while the rest of Paradise Bar arrived, two of its leading citizens, who had started out in a certain black stage drawn by four horses, coming in on foot. They were quite non-committal in their remarks, but it was inferred from a few words dropped casually that, after the stage stopped, they lost some time in chasing the driver back into the foothills; and it was observed that they were quite gloomy over their failure to capture him.

"Oh, never mind," said Morosin' Jones in an ecstasy of joy. "What's the good of cherishin' animosity? Why, for all I care he kin wear that red necktie now if he wants to"—then after a pause—"yes, and the silk hat, too, if he's bound to be a cabby."

Uncle Hank was smiling and shaking hands with everybody and explaining how the familiar motion of the stage had brought him out of his trance.

"I'm awful glad to have you here, boys; mighty glad to see you. The hosses and me are proud. I'll admit it. We oughter be. Ain't Paradise Bar with us, and didn't we win two out of three, after all?"

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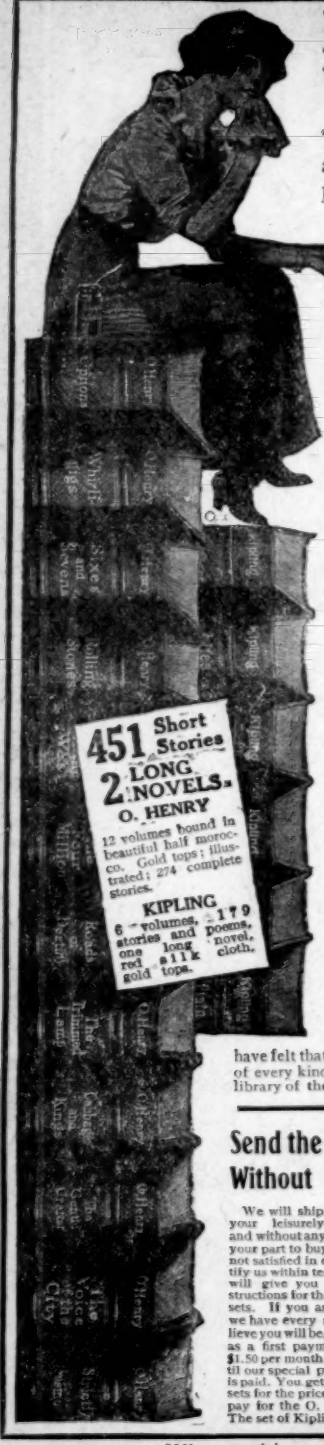
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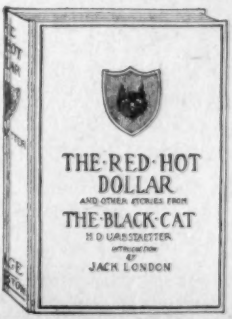

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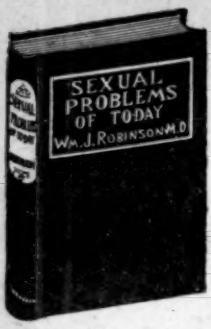

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